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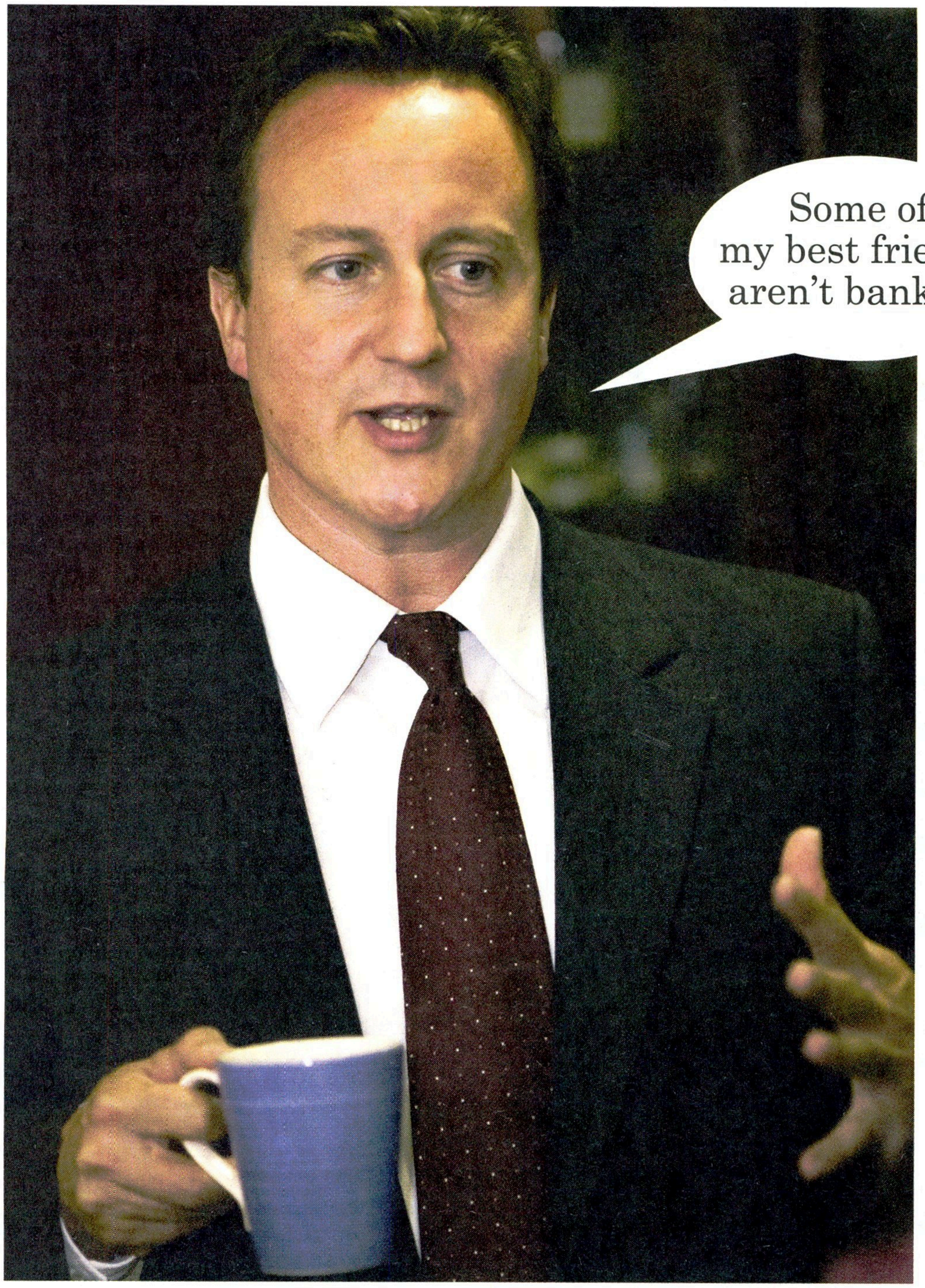
PRIVATE EYE

FINANCIAL MELTDOWN

CAMERON REASSURES NATION



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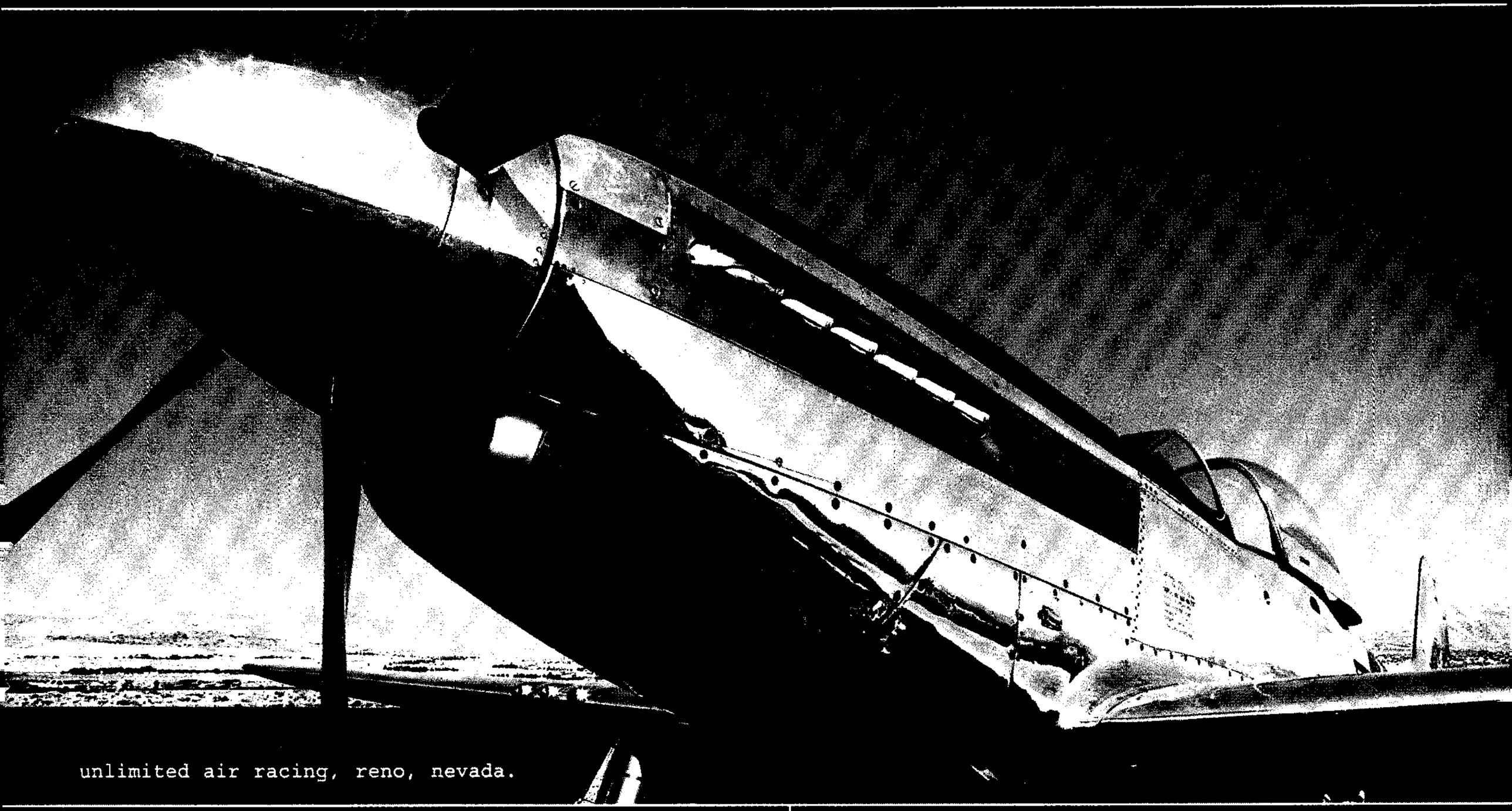

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"WHAT you won't hear from me this week is the sort of easy cheap lines beating up on the market system, bashing financiers," insisted David Cameron. And why would he bash the bankers when they include such good eggs as Louise Patten, wife of former Tory education minister John?

Lady Patten was a key non-executive director of Bradford & Bingley until its nationalisation, and she did her bit for the Tory cause by attacking Gordon Brown's business record. She was one of the top Tory business people who signed that well-publicised letter to the *Financial Times* on 21 September accusing Brown of "failing to meet the challenge" of the economy and demanding the introduction of "competitive tax rates" and a reduction in "the burden of regulation".

Whoops! Less than a week later Lady Patten's firm collapsed and had to be rescued using the very tax income she wanted to reduce. And though she wanted to cut "red tape", a bit more might have stopped her bank chucking money into the dodgy buy-to-let and self-certification mortgages which helped B&B go bust.

DAVID CAMERON's Conservatives might have been embarrassed by the naming of their donors who short-sold stock in troubled banks HBOS and Bradford & Bingley, but the party has received money from plenty of other hedge fund bosses who, though they have no registered bets against British financial institutions, are actively involved in "shorting".

They include three luminaries from the Sloane Robinson hedge fund, Jonathan Chenevix-Trench, Hugh Sloane and George Robinson. Chenevix-Trench gave the Tories £33,000 this year; Sloane has donated £184,000 since 2004 as well as an auction prize worth £1,500 (his money was specifically used to fund shadow chancellor George Osborne's office); while Robinson has given £182,000 since 2004.

One of Sloane Robinson's funds was run in partnership with Goldman Sachs who, the fund said, "will also provide the Partnership with financing lines and short selling facilities".

Meanwhile Patrick Nahon Fauchier of the Fauchier Partners hedge fund gave £33,000 worth of auction prizes this year and in 2005. Fauchier Partners runs some of its funds "with a consistent short bias, primarily in equities". According to its website: "These funds deliver performance which tends to be negatively correlated to markets... They often perform well at times of high equity and bond market volatility."

In June the Conservatives also received £50,000 from Jonathan Boyer and Nicholas Allan of the China-focused hedge fund Boyer Allan whose "investment philosophy" is "long/short directional stock picking".

Dave's defenders say it is unfair to pick on his short-selling chums because they provide a necessary service, exposing overpriced stock and weaknesses in financial institutions in order to "rebalance" the market. As it turns out the Tories have also been supported by one of the bankers whose own weakness was itself exposed.

Christopher Gent has given the party £89,900 since 2003. He is a director of Lehman Brothers – or was until its toxic investments sent the whole institution belly up. It must have been a terrible shock for him given his role on the Lehman audit committee.

GORDON BROWN promised to increase regulation to deal with collapsing financial institutions, but his biggest move so far is a massive decrease in regulation.

The PM allowed the money men to ignore the normal rules when he let Lloyds TSB sidestep a Competition Commission inquiry to take over HBOS. This forced deregulation is one more piece of financial blackmail by the bankers: give us our bail-outs and exemptions or the economy gets it! But there were other pressures on Brown too.

Firstly, Lloyds TSB's board is Gordon-friendly. Brown has good relations with chairman Victor Blank, while the board includes Sandy Leitch, a Labour donor whose many good works for the party were finally rewarded with a knighthood (*Eyes passim*). David Manning, Tony Blair's old foreign policy adviser, also sits on the board.

The bank had wanted to take over HBOS for some time but knew it would not get past anti-monopoly laws. Brown's bypassing of a competition inquiry therefore represents a huge and valuable gift from one part of the establishment to another – the "establishment" Brown claimed in his speech last week to the Labour party conference that he wanted to change rather than join.

But Brown would have had another pressing reason to want to stabilise HBOS. Thanks to Brown's private finance initiatives, the bank is central to NHS hospital and other public services. During the Labour conference his wife Sarah took part in a well-publicised visit to the site of Manchester Children's Hospital, part of a £420m PFI scheme. Via various PFI consortia, HBOS is helping run 12,000 beds in hospitals from London to Halifax. It also finances more than 30 school projects, covering 20,000 school places.

The ultimate financial effect of an HBOS collapse on these PFIs is hard to calculate, but the disruption would have been severe. Instead of "transferring risk" to the private sector, PFI has given the public sector another pressing reason to bail out the banks.

THE denunciation by archbishops Rowan Williams and John Sentamu of short-sellers preying on HBOS was predictably headline grabbing but didn't tell the whole story.

It left out any mention of the roughly £25m the Church of England will itself have lost in the last year having invested in HBOS shares!

In light of Williams' condemnation of "unbridled capitalism" and over-rewarded traders, will the C of E now rethink its other substantial investments in banks such as Barclays, financial services companies like Aviva and extremely profitable energy companies such as Centrica? Not to mention the tens of millions of church funds boosting the least bridled capitalists of them all through investment in private equity funds such as Apax and Charterhouse Capital...

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£35,000 Amount in customers' savings which is guaranteed even if banks go out of business

£375,000 Half-year bonus which is guaranteed for Richard Pym, boss of Bradford & Bingley

QUOTES OF THE WEAK

"...as I have travelled around the City and the UK – indeed around the world – I have seen first-hand the strength and depth of talent and reputation which underpins our truly global financial services industry".

– Then City minister Ed Balls addressing the British Bankers Association, 11 October 2006

"...As I have travelled around the City and the UK – indeed around the world – I have seen first-hand the strength and depth of talent and reputation which underpins our truly global financial services industry".

– Chancellor Alistair Darling addressing the Worshipful Society of International Bankers, 4 February 2008

"Now that's what I call a bail-out"

EDITORIAL
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ABC

Street Of Shame

"DON'T Let the Spivs Destroy Britain", howled Richard "Dirty" Desmond's *Daily Express* as it demanded a crackdown on "greedy hedge-fund traders" whose speculative short-selling was bringing British banks to their knees.

This is quite a volte-face from Dirty Des, who has been only too happy to invest his own very large fortune in hedge funds and other "spivvy" enterprises. Two years ago he boasted with undisguised joy to the *Sunday Times* about his portfolio: "Hermitage Fund, up 100 percent, Atlas Fund, up 80 percent – it's all mad."

WITH financial armageddon upon us, *Daily Telegraph* editor Will Lewis knew he had to act, and act fast.

He rose to the challenge magnificently. At Lewis's command, the paper's "style czar" Simon Heffer sent this grave message to hacks last Thursday: "So that we might maintain a sense of perspective about the current financial crisis, and report it in a language commensurate with quality media, the terms 'spiv' and 'fat cat' are henceforth banned."

The *Telegraph* pundit most affected by the ban will be the one who in recent months has attacked the winner of *The Apprentice* as a "spiv", bemoaned the replacement of hereditary peers by "nonentities, spivs and Labour donors" and dismissed David Cameron as "a PR spiv". Step forward… Simon Heffer.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"The suggestion that some observers feel the 'last remaining intelligent paper' has moved downmarket under his watch, leaves him almost lost for words. 'Show me what's inappropriate! Err, err, err,' he stammers, turning the pages furiously once again. 'It's so wrong, in my own mind I can't even begin to compute it'."

– Will Lewis, editor of the Telegraph, *interviewed in* Independent, *8 September*

Most viewed:

- Swiss restaurant plans to serve meals cooked with human breast milk
- Italian model plans to sell virginity for 1m euros
- Scientists study "out of body experiences"
- Celebrity sightings
- World's smallest man meets woman with world's longest legs

– Telegraph.co.uk, 19 September

TO celebrate its new full-colour look, the *Daily Telegraph* has sent an exciting message to readers describing how the paper is printed in Broxbourne, Hertfordshire.

Three years ago *Telegraph* chief executive Murdoch Maclennan justified to staff his plans for 300 redundancies, including 90 hacks' jobs, by saying the group was investing £150m in new printing presses. But did he ever spend this fabled £150m? Er, no. The *Telegraph* didn't build new presses. Instead, under a deal with Rupert Murdoch, it uses the brand-new all-colour presses in Broxbourne (and elsewhere in the country) that are owned by News International – a fact curiously absent from its self-congratulatory gush.

THERE's a silver lining in every meltdown, as News International's "senior insight planner" Chris Worrell was quick to inform his colleagues in the Dirty Digger's sales team in an email on 15 September.

Quoting that day's headlines from the *Times* about a predicted surge in UK unemployment and a torrent of job losses in the City, he urged them to remind potential advertisers that "the *Times*, the *Sunday Times* and *Times Online* combined reach over 1 in 4 business job seekers – that's 33% more than the nearest rival".

The timing could hardly have been better: more than 100 of the 450 sales staff were due to lose their jobs two weeks later, on 30 September, following James Murdoch's latest "reorganisation" of his dad's Wapping empire.

WITH jobs being slashed all over Fleet Street and experienced hacks being put out to grass in favour of 19-year-olds with Wikipedia accounts and humble salary expectations, one senior journalistic position remains unfilled after six months of trying.

The post of deputy news editor on the *Sunday Times* has to date been offered to 11 different people, all of whom have declined for the same reason – that it would involve working closely with news editor Nicholas Hellen, whose belligerence is only matched by his creative way with story presentation.

The latest example of the latter came with the recent *Sunday Times* scoop "John le Carré: I nearly left the West", a revelation of a 40-year-old desire "to defect to the Soviet Union during the Cold War" which lasted a full week before being shot down in flames on the paper's letters page, where Le Carré pointed out he had only talked about how "I had from time to time placed myself intellectually in the shoes of those on one side of the Curtain who took the short walk to the other… Only when traduced by your editors does it acquire such disproportionate and damaging significance."

SO OUTRAGED was the *Times* by the news that an anti-terror operation in Buckinghamshire had become "a £5m overtime bonanza" for Thames Valley police officers that it called in an expert to give his views on the topic.

"What is lost on them is that their nest egg will prevent other essential policing services being provided to the public, or the provision of better equipment for frontline police officers," thundered former Scotland Yard assistant commissioner Andy Hayman. "The police service has made great strides to improve its image and standards. Unfortunately actions such as these expose aspects of the old gravy train culture that go untouched."

Indeed they do. Why, only last December a senior officer abruptly took early retirement shortly after auditors referred his expense claims – which totalled £15,000 over three years and included restaurant bills of more than £300 – to the Metropolitan Police Authority for investigation. He was allowed to remain "on leave" for months in order to qualify for his full pension entitlement, and in April the MPA announced that it was "not minded to take any further action" against him after an investigation conducted by a chief constable from another force.

The senior officer in question? Scotland Yard assistant commissioner Andy Hayman.

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HOW PRIVACY WORKS

May 2007: Legal firm Schillings writes to editors warning them that to reveal the location of a house recently purchased by the footballer Steven Gerrard and his partner Alex would breach their right to privacy under the human rights act.

September 2008: *OK!* magazine features "WORLD EXCLUSIVE: Alex and Steven Gerrard exclusively invite *OK!* to their secret Portuguese mansion."

THE *Guardian* makes good money from its sponsored supplements – the latest of which was called "Alcohol and Us", backed by Diageo. It was full of serious articles about the dangers of booze, with a leader headlined "Sober appraisal" and articles such as "A drink to your health? Maybe not" and "Regulation will not be popular, but it's necessary".

These fine words were only slightly undermined by a giveaway *Grauniad* leaflet promoted with a giant banner headline on the front of that morning's paper – a "FREE fold-out wine guide", all about the pleasures of knocking back Chianti and Valpolicella. As C. P. Scott nearly said: comment is free, but *in vino veritas*…

YET more on Phil Hall, the former editor of the *News of the Screws* and *OK!* who is now reduced to acting as a PR puffer for dodgy football tycoons (see last *Eye*).

Despite his distinguished CV, there is at least one media hub to which poor Phil can't gain admittance: he has just been refused membership of the Groucho Club.

A ZZZ-LIST SPECIAL

Truly pathetic non-stories about celebrities from the national press...

"Froth is fun. Pictures of semi-naked women basically make the world a better place," announced Roger Alton last week, unveiling his new full-colour, tits 'n' sport incarnation of the *Independent*.

Nowhere is this more apparent than on the paper's "Pandora" diary page, which on Monday brought readers the news – lavishly illustrated with large snaps of the three curvaceous lovelies in question – that Joss Stone has no plans to give up singing and become an actress, actress Tamsin Egerton is not going to appear on stage in the near future, and film star Naomie Harris has no opinion on the recent downfall of Thabo Mbeki.

IT'S official: the *Daily Star Sunday* is the most disastrous title in the entire Sunday newspaper market, having lost 25 percent of its circulation over the past year.

Might the mass exodus have anything to do with the weekly ramblings of its addle-brained columnist Joe Mott? On 21 September, while complaining about the skinniness of the "dead-eyed, zombie-faced, baby giraffe-like creatures" patrolling the catwalk at London Fashion Week, he made the startling boast that "I have erections thicker than their waists".

This prompted an erstwhile female companion in the office to confirm that Mott had one thing in common with supermodels: "Well, he was certainly a size zero."

"*CORRIE* turns more tawdry than ever," sniffed the *Daily Mail* over news it found sadly necessary to illustrate with a large photograph of teenage actress Helen Flanagan, who plays Rosie Webster in *Coronation Street,* posing on a bed wearing nothing but a lacy basque.

"The soap, which is keen for a new femme fatale, has been sexing up the young character's image with increasingly raunchy outfits. Flanagan, 18, said: 'Rosie suddenly became aware that she had a woman's body and wanted to dress sexily.'... Tonight's show is likely to add to the controversy surrounding soaps and sex."

Meanwhile, on page 3 of the same edition, *Mail* readers were treated to another dose of tawdriness with a large picture of teenage actress Emma Watson posing in a bathtub wearing nothing but jewellery. "The 18-year-old who made her name in the *Harry Potter* films... showed in a series of glamorous photos for *Italian Vogue* she can play roles rather more grown-up," the paper leered.

IDLY sabotaging the user-generated online encyclopedia Wikipedia following the UEFA cup draw back in August, a user of the b3ta web forum going by the name of "godspants" made a few amendments to the entry for Cypriot team Omonia Nicosia.

He (or she) noted that they were sponsored by Natasha Kaplinsky, that their former players included Jean Claude Van Damme and Richard Clayderman, and claimed that "A small but loyal group of fans are lovingly called 'The Zany Ones' – they like to wear hats made from discarded shoes and have a song about a little potato." As you do.

Writing up his pre-match report on Omonia's match against Manchester City for the *Daily Mirror* on 18 September, sports hack David Anderson decided to do some in-depth research. Thus it was that *Mirror* readers were informed that City manager "Mark Hughes will not tolerate any slip-ups against the Cypriot side, whose fans are known as the 'Zany Ones' and wear hats made from shoes".

Brilliantly, by the rules of Wikipedia – which relies on "verifiablility – whether readers are able to check that material added has already been published by a reliable, third-party source" such as "mainstream newspapers" – this is now officially true.

"BLOW for over-65s who want to stay in work," the *Daily Express* reported last Wednesday after a European judge confirmed that it was legal to stop people working at 65. "The decision was a devastating blow to those fighting to scrap Britain's compulsory retirement age."

But not such a blow for management at the *Express*, who are trying to force two 65-year-old sub-editors into retirement against their will. This is on top of the 86 other redundancies Richard "Dirty" Desmond has announced, but has an extra allure: if you kick people into retirement rather than redundancy, you don't have to give them a proper pay-off.

After many years' service, all the sexagenarian subs are being offered is a £250 John Lewis voucher. Having shelled out £2.5m to Wayne 'n' Colleen for their wedding photos, Dirty Des needs all the little savings he can find.

Happily, belt-tightening is not universal at Northern & Shell. Dirty Des has just ordered a £17m Gulfstream private jet to fly him and his cronies back and forth to New York.

FEEBLE consumer protection body Energywatch shuts up shop next week to merge with Postwatch and the National Consumer Council to form the (potentially even more useless) Consumer Focus. But watch out for the name reappearing soon.

The name Energywatch belongs to npower, which has licensed it to the independent organisation for the past eight years. According to *Marketing Week*, npower is planning to use the brand to launch an initiative to push energy saving gizmos. Various industry experts and rivals are already grumbling about npower trying to trade off the name's presence in the UK market.

But what presence? According to a critical National Audit Office report, which led to the decision to merge the watchdogs, a survey found that just 2 percent of people could even think of Energywatch when asked to name organisations that could help with a gas or electricity complaint.

HACKWATCH

Anatole Kaletsky

"DID you happen to notice the collapse of global capitalism and the end of the world financial system as we know it?" the *Times*'s economic guru Anatole Kaletsky asked on 6 September last year, after returning from a month-long summer holiday.

"While dozing on the beach or driving round a medieval hill-town, you might have heard some snippets on the radio about banks collapsing, hedge funds going bankrupt and millions of Americans losing their homes in mortgage foreclosures." No need to worry, however. "This crisis," he reassured readers, "will probably turn out to be another storm in a teacup." And so it proved...

14 January 2008: Global stock markets suffer their worst early-January trading since records began, but one man radiates optimism. "I believe that the global **credit** crisis, far from taking a turn for the worse, is now almost over," Kaletsky writes. In the next six weeks all the leading banks will announce their final write-offs to cope with the sub-prime crisis. "The banks will then recapitalise and return to more or less normal operations."

21 March: What is the significance of the fire-sale of Bear Stearns and the short-sellers' conspiracy against HBOS? "Almost all financial experts... insist that the worst lies ahead, indeed that events so far have only hinted at an impending financial apocalypse," Kaletsky writes. "I feel equally confident, by contrast, that the banking cycle is now at, or very near, its nadir and that conditions in America will soon start improving."

21 April: "Global credit conditions should gradually return to normal in the months ahead," he chirrups merrily. "The credit crunch may be in its final stages."

5 May: "Signs that the worst of the banking crisis may be over appeared to be confirmed by rallies in financial markets worldwide last week."

2 June: "The credit crunch seems to be ending..."

12 June: "The credit crunch is no longer a big threat to the world financial system..."

17 July: As the two largest financial institutions in the world – Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac – teeter on the edge of bankruptcy, with debts of $5 trillion, even Pollyanna has misgivings. "According to the overwhelming majority of financial analysts in the City of London and Wall Street, the world is now in the worst economic crisis since the 1930s. Anyone who doubted this cataclysmic consensus – and I must admit that I played down the credit crunch, describing it initially as a 'storm in a teacup' – must surely be eating humble pie after the events of last weekend."

8 September: Humble pie tastes better if eaten in a Michelin-starred restaurant, of course. Kaletsky returns from a long summer break in France full of good cheer, just in time to celebrate the decision by US treasury secretary Henry Paulson to rescue Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. "Last night's announcement was unqualified good news... a US economic recovery is now assured."

12 September: Or, on reflection, perhaps not. Paulson's rescue of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac "signalled the complete failure of the biggest, most dynamic, most innovative and competitive markets that have existed in the history of capitalism – the Wall Street stockmarket and the market for US bonds... But what is even more significant is that nobody in American politics or business objected to this anti-capitalist coup." Kaletsky concludes that "the innermost sanctum of the global capitalist system [has] suddenly collapsed".

15 September: Some readers may wonder how his two previous columns can be reconciled. "Are these statements absurdly contradictory? Or did something change dramatically in those four days? Or was I just talking rubbish?" Funnily enough, his answer to all these questions is "no".

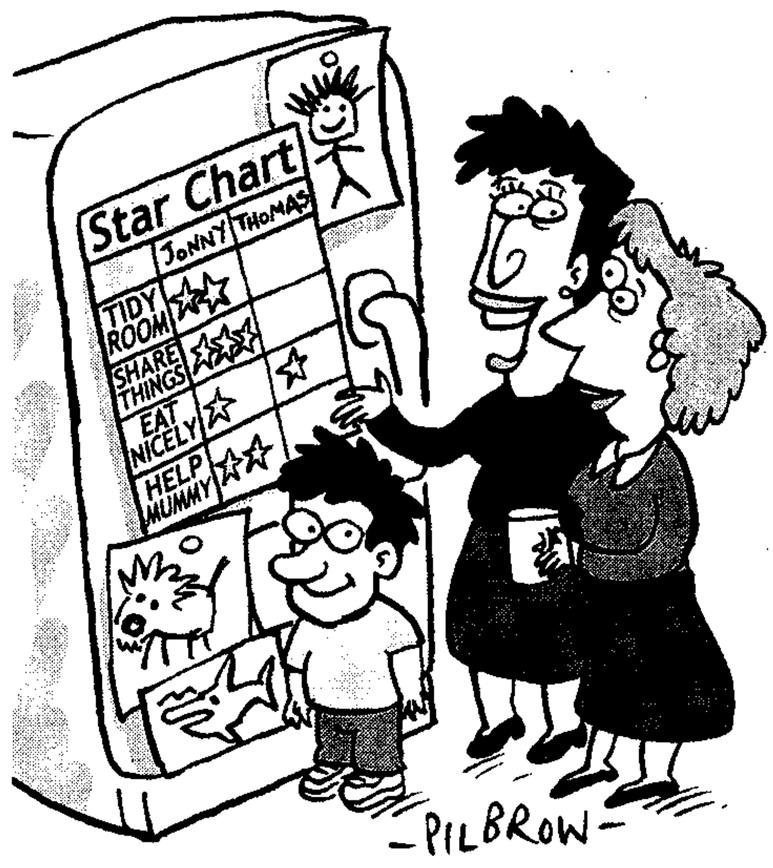
16 September: Eight months after declaring the credit crisis "almost over", Kaletsky concedes that "The prophets of doom may have been right after all... we are now unquestionably in the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression."

18 September: "The events of the past two weeks may be only the prelude, not the climax, of this amazing crisis," he predicts. "There will be a time for apportioning blame and inflicting punishments and reforming regulatory structures. But right now the only question is how to avoid a catastrophe in the next few weeks."

20 September: Panic over. "The violent zig-zags of the past two weeks – not just in financial markets, but also in government policies and economic expectations – have left everyone dizzy. Not least readers of these pages, many of whom have complained about the way I lurched from optimism to pessimism." Only two days after foreseeing imminent apocalypse, he is pleased to announce "another lurch in my views, back towards optimism... Fears of bank failures and financial panics should soon dissipate."

25 September: Kaletsky's optimism dissipates instead: "American capitalism is on the brink of disaster," he reveals. What was once a painful but manageable credit crunch has become "a global catastrophe... the death-spiral of financial values", and it's all Henry Paulson's fault. "Not only did Mr Paulson not know what he was doing. He did not know what he was talking about."

Remind you of anyone?



"Thomas? Oh – he's my husband"

DESPITE Gordon Brown's promises to "clean up the City", on the fringes of last week's Labour party conference in Manchester it was "business as usual".

While Gordon tut-tutted before the TV cameras, at a fringe meeting paid for by the City of London, his treasury minister Yvette Cooper was busy defending the capital's wheeler-dealers, arguing that even though "people are very angry at what they see as City excesses" Labour's job was to make sure the "City has legitimacy".

She did so by nervously rejecting proposals for separating retail and investment banking or increasing oversight or levies against failure as "rather more radical restructuring than the government planned" or "a step further than government policy".

Nor did she criticise fellow panellist Stuart Fraser, a City of London official who lectured delegates about the need to keep regulation "flexible" and "avoid excessive red tape and not act in haste".

Thus is was that at a time of financial meltdown in the capitalist west, a Labour Treasury minister stood beneath a City of London banner arguing against serious financial reform.

GORDON now has "unacceptable" City bonuses in his sights, too. But why as chancellor did he refuse to tackle the excesses for a decade? One reason is that he allowed his precarious finances to become dependent on these very bonuses.

As his books lurched into the red following the post-dot com downturn of the early 2000s, MPs questioned Gordon on repeated shortfalls in his predictions for tax revenues. Relief was at hand, insisted Brown, in the shape of those City bonuses. "I think another major point which has got to be taken into account is of course that bonuses, which really were not available to people in the previous two years and when bonuses in the City were very low," he told the treasury select committee in March 2004. "They have been relatively high in January and February of this year and they contribute quite a substantial amount to the additional revenue that is coming into the Treasury."

Three months later, in the wake of controversy over the City fat cats' 2004 bonuses, Brown was back to defend them: "Income tax revenues have started to rise again as a result of bonuses returning in the City. I think it is sometimes forgotten that bonuses are a big source of extra income tax." Dependent on the bankers' bonuses for economic respite, there was never any chance he would act against them. Now Brown admits that the same bonuses, "based on short-term deals that have no relationship to long-term performance", are "damaging the economy". And whose fault might that be?

"ARK applies the same principles and disciplines to managing the charity as it would to running a business."

So says ARK (Absolute Return for Kids), an educational charity which already runs three of the government's academy schools, in Hammersmith, Westminster and Southwark, and has more in the pipeline. So what is the business on which its principles are modelled? Er, hedge funds.

ARK was founded by a group of wealthy players in the financial sector, including multi-millionaire hedge fund boss Arpad Busson, and the funds come from donors in the "alternative asset management industry". With Gordon Brown accusing the greedy hedge funds of "irresponsible behaviour", should the government still be handing Britain's schools over to the short-sellers?

LIB DEM treasury spokesman Lord Oakeshott was quick to denounce the Tories for taking money from short-selling hedge funds. He told the press: "Now we see that the same hedge fund wolf pack who brought HBOS to its knees are bankrolling the Tory party."

Meanwhile Lib Dem party leader Nick Clegg insisted: "We must stop the amoral culture that sees speculators betting on banks to fail."

How true! But if only Oakeshott and Clegg had spoken to one of their party's biggest donors, Paul Marshall, who has handed over £162,235 and is editor of the free market-oriented "Orange book" which influences the current party leadership so heavily.

Marshall also happens to be one of the two bosses of hedge fund Marshall Wace. And thanks to Financial Services Authority regulations, everyone (apart from Oakeshott and Clegg, it seems) now knows that Marshall Wace handled large "short" positions against both HBOS and Bradford & Bingley in June and July.

IN 2006, when Labour was proposing super-casinos, the Conservatives condemned "the government's reckless encouragement of gambling".

They claimed Labour had "stood idly by and watched an explosion in Britain's gambling habits", and suggested that Gordon Brown encouraged gambling because he needed the tax income it would generate.

Strange, then, that one of the Tories' latest big donors is Crown Leisure, Britain's leading fruit machine firm, which gave the party £50,000 in June. Does the Tories' enthusiasm for taking the winnings from British one-armed bandits suggest that it wasn't the inherent rip-off of gambling that they objected to, but rather Labour's willingness to let big American firms plunder our casino market? How thoughtful of them to stick up for the smaller British business!

DENIZENS of Whitehall are surprised by Monday's announcement that a civil servant who mislaid secret papers on a train three months ago is to be prosecuted under the official secrets act. Could it be, they wonder, that the government hopes to expiate the sins of carelessness and incompetence – all those other lost files and data discs – through this one sacrifice?

The official, who was on secondment from the ministry of defence to the cabinet office, left the two documents on a train to Waterloo. A fellow passenger passed them to Frank Gardner of the BBC, who in turn gave them to the police. One was on Iraq's security forces, the other on al-Qaeda's vulnerabilities; but Whitehall sources insisted there was nothing which could endanger anyone if they fell into the wrong hands: "The embarrassment of the loss is greater than the embarrassment of the contents." Even so, the absent-minded civil servant must stand trial, *pour encourager les autres*.

Will Admiral Lord West be called as an expert witness? In 1986, the then Captain West took home from his office at the MoD a thick file of classified papers on naval cuts, which fell out of his overcoat pocket on a towpath in Berkshire while he was walking a friend's dog. They were picked up by a freelance defence hack who splashed them all over the *Mail on Sunday*.

Although West was charged with wrongfully removing secret documents, not taking proper care of them and failing to inform the ministry immediately of their disappearance, his court-martial was a cosy affair. As we noted at the time (*Eye* 651), naval top brass "found it hard to conceal their grins". He was given a severe reprimand, the most lenient sentence the court could impose, and went on to become the Ruler of the Queen's Nav-ee.

Since last year he has been a minister in Gordon Brown's government – responsible for "security and counter-terrorism"!

READING between the lines of transport secretary Ruth Kelly's party conference resignation speech, it seems the skids really are under the Crossrail project (see *Eye* 1219).

While it was noticeable that Gordon Brown made no mention at all of the scheme in his speech, Kelly merely commented: "I was delighted that it was Labour that secured the deal on Crossrail."

There was no mention of the importance of the rail scheme, its size (the biggest such project in Europe), or the opportunities it creates, suggesting progress is very much in doubt.

AFTER the high court slammed the government's public consultation over new nuclear power stations last year as "misleading, seriously flawed, manifestly inadequate and procedurally unfair", you'd think mandarins might have learned. But recent consultations on the siting of nuclear stations suggest not.

An *Eye* reporter applied to go to one of the meetings but was barred the night before and told that he wasn't a "stakeholder" in the nuclear debate. The department for business, enterprise and regulatory reform (BERR) clearly believes that protest group Parents Concerned About Hinkley (PCAH) isn't a stakeholder either – even though it sits on the official site stakeholder group for Hinkley Point in Somerset. The group has made a formal complaint to BERR to ask why it was not invited.

PCAH is not alone. Delegate lists for the three events, in Bristol, Manchester and London, show that out of 117 attendees the vast majority were representatives from nuclear companies, their lobbyists and their consultants, along with a few regulators, while fewer than half a dozen of those opposed to the plans made it in.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

55% Percentage of UK's gold reserves sold off by Gordon Brown from 1999 onwards

55% Increase in price of gold in last 12 months

JOHANNA KASCHKE

In May 2007 (Private Eye 1184) we published an article in which we referred to Johanna Kaschke as being a "one-time sympathiser of the German Baader-Meinhof group". This could have been taken by some to mean that Ms Kaschke was a supporter of terrorism. We wish to make it clear that it was never our intention to make any such suggestion and we apologise to Ms Kaschke if that was how the article was understood by any of our readers.

CALLED TO ORDURE

Labour in Manchester 2008

NOTHING is as cheering as a political spin operation exploding like a cheap fountain pen. So it proved with the Labour leadership team's plans on the day of Gordon Broon's "speech of a lifetime".

The day started with special seats being reserved in the hall for the consiglieris of Wapping – *Sun* editress Rebekah Wade, her boss James Murdoch and that inexplicable little bore Irwin Stelzer who bluffs his way round the British political world posing as the Digger's best mate. Their prime locations ensured them a good view of the Clunking Fist, not to mention the saccharine warm-up act by his "apolitical" wife Sarah. But James Murdoch was less than entirely gripped. Halfway through Broon's hour-long epic the young Master was casting heavy eyelids at his chunky wristwatch and seemed to be aching for a cigarette.

As soon as Brown's so-so speech was over, things started to unravel. The PM's beefy security detail insisted on "sterilising" (ie closing) the busy link passage to the press hall. This meant that a vast crowd of surging, seething hacks was kept waiting for 15 minutes until the Browns and Harriet Harman deigned to leave the conference hall.

Fleet Street's finest became increasingly narked at missing vital filing time. Photographers started taking their revenge by snapping the publicity-shy Special Branch bodyguards, who themselves started getting lippy.

When the now smouldering hacks were finally admitted to their working area – several having already missed instant-reaction deadlines – they soon found the place heaving with quacking party activists who were queueing outside the Labour press desk. What for? Er, to have their photos taken with Brown, one every five seconds. Handshake, grin, FLASH, next please.

When the journos started to take the piss out of this Santa's grotto-style event and when TV camera crews started to film it and ask the delegates what they really thought of the useless prime minister, Labour heavies barged into the melee. "You can't film here, it's the press room!" they cried in a line reminiscent of Dr Strangelove's "gentlemen, you can't fight in here, it's the war room".

The Labour goons did eventually succeed in stopping the impudent hacks from doing their job but not before some excellent footage of heavy-handed spin doctoring had been secured.

Enter Broon's thirsty press chief Damien McBride, a not entirely bad bloke who late at night has been known to pour forth his woes about working for No 10's phone chucker. McThirsty wanted to see how the papers would report Sarah Brown's transformation from blameless PM's spouse to blatantly political figure. The answer? Not entirely favourably. One disgusted scribe from the *Mail* told McBride that the Sarah Brown stunt was "a puke-making disaster" and a nearby table of "monkeys" (Fleet Street jargon for photographers) was cackling that the until-now saintly Mrs Brown was now a legitimate target for "dog shots" (unflattering snaps caught by a motor-driven lens).

The aghast spin doctor immediately set about planting favourable stories about how it had all been Sarah's idea at the last minute. Alas, this romanticised version was thrown into doubt the following morning when Brown told a radio interviewer that he and Sarah had kicked the idea around since "the summer".

Poor McBride's day still had a difficult 11 hours to run. The story of Ruth Kelly's departure from the cabinet broke late in the evening and the No 10 press chief, assisted by a crumpled special adviser from the transport department, had to call a press briefing at 3am in the drunk-littered foyer of the Midland Hotel to try to establish "a line" on the Kelly controversy. Needless to say, not all those attending were entirely (or even remotely) sober. No doubt that, rather than any terminological inexactitude by the Downing Street spokesman, was the reason so many different theories about Kelly's sacking/resignation promptly appeared in the media in the following hours.

Elsewhere on the conference beat, Sheffield Attercliffe MP Clive Betts distinguished himself in the bar of the Midland by flaking out on the sofa, in full view of scores of onlookers, at 6.15pm on the Monday. The well-refreshed Betts wasn't just asleep. He was snoring like a cartoon character, head thrown back, mouth open. One fellow Labour MP had to be forcibly restrained from popping a cocktail olive down his gullet.

All in all, then, a highly successful conference.

'Gavel Basher'

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Duncan Smith unveils his 'fair deal for all'" – *Daily Telegraph*, 14 May 2003, five months before IDS was deposed as leader of his party.

"Gordon Brown to promise 'fairness for all' in Labour Party conference speech" – *Daily Telegraph*, 23 September 2008.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

"A small band of Labour MPs are making a concerted effort to bring down the Prime Minister. Their actions are self indulgent and could be severely damaging to the prospects of political renewal." – **Neal Lawson**, *former adviser to Gordon Brown, 15 September 2008*

"Any renewal of Labour will only happen when the process of electing a new leader starts. It is impossible to think of an argument or case for things getting better while Blair remains prime minister, only worse." – **Neal Lawson**, *22 August 2006*

A-K THE NOO!

SCOTTISH nationalist hearts have always been in the highlands – but traditionally the Nats loved the wild hills of Scotland, not the far wilder mountains of the Pakistan-Afghan border. The Scottish public learnt in August that the SNP's holiday itinerary had changed when the *Glasgow Evening Times* published footage of Jahangir Hanif firing an AK-47 at a military training camp.

The SNP councillor and millionaire landlord not only let rip himself but also encouraged all his children, including his five-year-old daughter Sana, to blast away with assault rifles too. The family travelled in a blacked-out car into the "Federally Administered Tribal Area" [Fata], where the writ of the Pakistani government does not run. The car pulled up at the village of Durra, in the heart of the most dangerous region of central Asia.

This did not worry Cllr Hanif (SNP, Glasgow Southside). Alex Salmond didn't seem overly concerned either, and his reaction to the scandal shows the growing strength of the bonds between Scottish nationalism and radical Islamism (see last Eye).

Until the Hanif affair, the man who would be the next king of Scotland had taken a hard line on gun control. Last year the SNP accused the British government of "completely overlooking the serious airgun problems facing Scotland". But, lethal though airguns can be, the handful of fatalities they have caused are tiny in comparison to the millions killed with AK-47 automatic assault rifles.

Instead of forcing Hanif to resign, however, Salmond gave him the political equivalent of a slap on the wrist and suspended him for a mere two months. If he thought the story would go away, however, he reckoned without Cllr Hanif's 17-year-old daughter, Noor. She sent a furious letter to Salmond and copied it to every member of the Scottish parliament.

"I want to explain what really happened when our dad took us to Durra," she wrote. "I don't think we should ever have been taken there, to the lawless area, which I have read is the world's largest illegal gun market.

"My dad is a dominating man. I still have nightmares about that day in Durra; the people were scary with their faces covered like in the movies, and the gun shots were deafening... I was very nervous, and was relieved to leave.

"I cannot believe he has been let off. My siblings and I were put in an environment where people were pointing loaded AK-47 guns at each other. I cannot believe you have taken it so lightly."

The letter went on to describe life in the Hanif family, and his lawyers sprung into action. Blogs that had posted its full contents were threatened with writs.

Faced with a choice between an old Scottish Muslim man and a young Scottish Muslim woman, the SNP instinctively came down on the father's side. John Mason, SNP victor in this summer's Glasgow East by-election, said criticism of his trigger-happy colleague was – wait for it – racist.

"The repeated attacks on the SNP's Councillor Hanif are coming across as thinly disguised racism," he fumed. Mason didn't appear to know that the Pakistani government does not control the tribal areas, and went on to insist that criticism of Hanif could "easily be construed as attacks on Pakistan itself and on Pakistan's right to order its internal affairs as it sees fit. I would have expected that way of thinking in the colonial era, but I am disappointed to hear it in 2008."

So there you have it. A party committed to gun control and the rights of women and children has decided that questions about a gun-toting, domineering father are colonialist.

Salmond ducked and dived and tried to keep his name out of the affair. But when challenged by Labour he refused to disassociate himself from Mason's remarks. All politicians should deplore racism "wherever it emerges", he piously declared.

'Ratbiter'

TV

Labour party conference (all channels)

Global financial crisis (all channels)

DURING one of his special editions of *Newsnight* from the Labour party conference in Manchester, Paxo chatted to Prezza about the events of the day. Wasn't it the strangest conference ever, the presenter wondered? There was a sense of calm and purpose on the platform but, in private, the only thing people were talking about was when Brown would go?

"Which people?" the old bulimic bruiser challenged him. "Oh, loads of them," he was told, a reply which met the objection that no one had been saying any such things to Prezza. And so it went on, becoming television journalism at its most pantomimic: "Oh, yes they are!" "Oh, no they aren't!"

Next, the host referred to the rumours that David Miliband claimed to have toned down his speech in order to avoid a "Heseltine moment". He hadn't said that, Prezza insisted. Oh, yes, he had, Paxo countered, but rather hesitantly because he knew that the source, revealed on that night's BBC News, was Nick Robinson's report that the foreign secretary had been overheard making this remark in an elevator in the conference centre. This allowed Prescott the sucker punch: the BBC should surely not be relying on such tittle-tattle.

This was a vivid illustration of the difficulty television journalism has in covering any story that does not consist of verifiable facts (ie what happened where and how many died). If a newspaper decides that the Labour conference is a cosmetic sham – as they all did – it simply asserts this view in reports and sketches. If John Prescott or a No 10 press officer shouts that all this is bollocks, such negative opinions are simply excised from the coverage. If a newspaper hack is told that Miliband has said something in a lift, it is authoritatively reported that the remarks are something that the foreign secretary "told friends after his speech".

But the telly – and especially the BBC – can't do this. By its very nature, television reporting is forced to concentrate on events that are filmable, which in the case of something like the Labour conference means it is forced to take orchestrated propaganda in good faith. And even if the official pictures are questioned, British broadcasting's obsession with "balance", imposed by charters and regulators, means the propagandists are even given 50 percent of any discussion of their propaganda.

The item immediately after the Paxo-Prezza stand-off was another good example of this problem. The host conducted a round-table discussion with two journalists, one of whom believed that Broon would now survive while the other insisted that he was still on the way out.

For all these reasons, the governing emotion of British television journalism is the fear of giving offence or being challenged. Always a risk, this reflex has been strengthened by the post-Hutton cowardice. For example, it was clearly fear of a Campbellesque bollocking from No 10 that led the corporation to be so precise about the source of the "Heseltine moment" remark, but the release of this detail made the report easier to denigrate.

The international financial crisis further demonstrated the difficulties for TV. The potential collapse of a bank is another example of a story that cannot easily be reported by dividing a sheet of paper down the middle and presenting the arguments for and against.

Not only is there considerable uncertainty about whether a bank will survive or rescue package work, but the nature of the reporting can have an effect on the outcomes. Industrious BBC business editor Robert Peston's scoop about the HBOS takeover, for example, may have allowed some to make a killing on the markets (a matter now under investigation) and may also have been placed by government sources to calm the markets. Whatever happened, this doesn't fit the formulas of factual and balanced reporting.

The instinct of TV reporters is still to reach for the nearest source of what looks like vaguely solid fact (opinion polls, share prices). But these then have the effect of changing the shape of the story. And even worse are broadcasters' own attempts at taking the national temperature.

BBC and ITV reports on both the Labour conference and the economic meltdown employed the traditional formula of vox pop packages in which members of the public gave their views on the news. These segments used the usual mathematics: one person saying that Broon's speech had changed their mind about him, while another intransigently spat that he was still a prat. It was just the same outside the building society: one old dear was so worried about the credit crunch that she was taking all her money out, but a breezy old geezer said he wasn't worried and had lived through worse.

This balancing tactic has always been problematic, giving the impression that Britain neatly divides between yeas and nays on any given topic. Viewers must strongly suspect that the reporters struggled to find Brown admirers and sanguine savers, yet rules of broadcasting balance dictated that they were given equal weight with the probable majority opinion.

There's a hoary formula that old hacks borrowed from old cop shows: just the facts, ma'am. But, on stories where the facts are elusive and may be influenced by the coverage, TV hacks are in trouble.

'Remote Controller'

MEDIA NEWS

"ADAM, darling!" trilled killer-bimbo Amanda "Gissa Job" Platell when she spotted Sky political editor Adam Boulton at the *Grauniad*'s Labour conference booze-up. Cue much gushing and air-kissing.

No such gush for the young chap Boulton was talking to, a nondescript nerdy type in thick-rimmed glasses, presumably a junior policy wonk from a think-tank. Amanda waited for him to obey the rule of etiquette at media parties: when a celeb greets another celeb, all non-celebs in the vicinity must instantly sod off.

Yet he continued to hover. "Who are you and what are you doing here?" she demanded crossly, grabbing the conference pass round his neck for a closer look. Then she read the name on the pass: James Murdoch.

Later in the evening Amanda was seen berating Boulton, whom she somehow held partly responsible for the instant death of her career prospects at News International. "Why didn't you warn me?" she wailed.

A CHEERY email from head office arrived recently in all ITV regional newsrooms.

"Hello all – I hope you are able to help out with a mini snapshot around the regions ITN are planning for Wednesday, when monthly unemployment figures are released... They're looking for different case studies around the country where people have either lost their jobs, are laying off employees or are facing the prospect of joining the ranks of the unemployed in the near future. If you can help please get in touch..."

A number of hardworking hacks were happy to help, pointing out that one large company had recently announced plans to save £40m by reducing its regional newsrooms from 17 to nine, and informed all staff that they would have to reapply for their jobs, with up to half of them being made redundant. Its name? ITV.

"I WANT to welcome our newest baby: BBC Alba, our Gaelic TV channel, which BBC Scotland launched on Friday night after years of planning." So said BBC director-general Mark Thompson at the launch of "a dedicated Gaelic–only service on cable and satellite TV" in Scotland.

The new channel will cost £14m, co-funded by MG Alba, formerly known as the Gaelic Media Service, to the tune of £10m, and the BBC (£4m).

According to the 2001 census, the number of Gaelic speakers in Scotland has reached an all-time low. The count fell by 11 percent over 10 years to a figure of 58,650. "This is the first time that the number has fallen below 60,000, bringing Gaelic close to the figure at which it is thought a language can no longer survive," said the BBC's own report.

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1

Anne Robinson: The medieval map of the world housed in Hereford Cathedral is known as the Mappa what?

Contestant: The world.

AR: In legend, Uther Pendragon was the father of which king?

Contestant: Charles.

talkSPORT

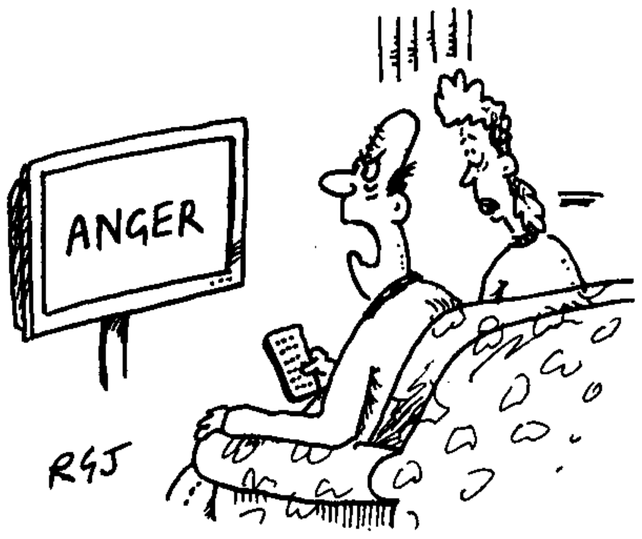
Mike Parry: Which team was runner-up to Lyon in the French First Division, taking the runner-up spot and entry into the Champions League?

Contestant: Bordeaux?

Parry: As in the Tapestry, yes?

Contestant: Yes.

Parry: That's the correct answer.



"Oh no! It's bloody Griff Rhys Jones"

BULLY BEEF

***UNDERCOVER SOLDIER*, an attempt by BBC One to expose bullying during army basic training, was "an impressive piece of investigative reporting", according to its executive producer Clive Edwards.**

As the new commissioning editor for TV current affairs, Edwards was also the man who commissioned it. But viewers saw this "illustration of public service broadcasting at its best" for what it really was: feeble.

Bullying by army instructors is an important but difficult story to crack, especially when it involves secret filming and legal complications. Given this, the BBC might have picked a properly trained, experienced reporter to cover it. Instead, it trawled a few universities to find a student with no journalistic training, Russell Sharp, to join the army and "get the story".

Not surprisingly, Sharp came up with very little even after five months' filming. As he himself admitted on the BBC website: "It was hard finding the time and opportunity to investigate what was going on in my own platoon." This explains why most of his "interviews" were nothing more than fuzzy pictures of a few crows (recruits) saying that a mate had told them he'd been roughly treated.

Most of the allegations had come from a different section, where he found it "even harder" to collect his hearsay evidence. "I had little free time and was escorted everywhere around camp by a corporal," he admitted.

This put Sharp in breach of the BBC's own editorial guidelines, which require reporters "to try to witness events and gather information first hand" and be "reluctant to rely on a single source". First hand information, when it came, was hardly conclusive. In five months, Sharp says: "I saw two corporals lose their temper and break the rules", failing to film either occasion.

Not that this will bother Sharp. Despite his lack of journalistic skills, the BBC has given him a full-time job.

'Squarebasher'

SNOOPS & SNOOPMEN

CITY of London police have dropped their investigation of BT's online snooping, telling privacy campaigners that the company's covert wiretapping of its customers' internet use was a "civil issue" and that customers had given "implied consent" to be spied on via the Phorm ad-targeting system (see last *Eye*).

This is clearly nonsense. As the *Eye* went to press, campaigners were looking into the cost of taking the City cops to judicial review. Meanwhile BT is sending out invitations to participate in "BT Webwise" which is in fact a new trial of Phorm.

AD NAUSEAM

IT'S been the most talked-about ad of the year, garlanded with awards, cited again and again as proof that British advertising remains a creative world-beater. It is, of course, Cadbury's drumming gorilla, so offbeat, so ironic… and so entirely useless.

A survey by market research company TNS last week showed that in the year to July, while the ads have been running, Cadbury's Dairy Milk has lost market share to its arch-rival Galaxy, made by Mars. Galaxy's marketing has centred on targeting the people who actually eat chocolate, with promotions such as a tie-in with the *Sex and the City* movie. Would the last person in Britain who actually watches TV adverts please turn off the lights?

JUNK food companies love to get their teeth into any campaign that can link them to healthy eating.

Thus a consortium of usual suspects (Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Mars, Nestlé, Kellogg's, Cadburys, etc) announced its £200m contribution to the latest anti-obesity campaign this summer – before the government had even got around to launching the scheme.

The Change4Life "social marketing" campaign, just launched by Alan Johnson and Ed Balls, will clearly fatten the pockets of M&C Saatchi and Freud, who have been appointed to do the advertising and PR respectively. The government has put up £75m to pay for a website, PR, field marketing and a national advertising campaign aimed at encouraging parents to make better food choices for their children.

It's worth noting Freud also do the PR for PepsiCo, Mars and Nestlé. Trebles all round!

Some Unfortunate Ads to Laugh at This Week:

● A Merrill Lynch ad in 20 September's *Economist* informed readers that "to remain competitive, businesses require access to capital". This, six days after Bank of America bought Merrill Lynch because of its lack of, ahem, access to capital.

● The Halifax "Who gives you extra?" campaign is still gracing TV screens, even after HBOS, of which Halifax is part, has been sold to Lloyds TSB in order to avoid the group's collapse. Neither Howard nor Halifax will be giving anyone anything much any more.

● The Lib Dems' new slogan is "Make It Happen" – one also shared with RBS. RBS made it happen last year with losses of £691m.

TESCO CHEQUE OUT

"TESCO has won its epic legal battle with the *Guardian*," Stephen Glover noted approvingly in the *Independent* last week. The paper had published an apology "that can only be described as abject" for its splash in February which accused the supermarket chain of avoiding £1bn in corporation tax.

But one or two questions continued to puzzle him. The *Grauniad* conceded early on that it had made a mistake: the offshore scheme it exposed was designed to avoid stamp duty land tax, not corporation tax. "On 3 May the paper admitted its muddle over taxes, but it did not withdraw the imputation of some tax avoidance, and went on to preach at Tesco in an editorial about the company's social responsibility in meeting its tax obligations," Glover harrumphed. "If the *Guardian* had had the grace and good sense on 3 May to admit its fault in the way that it was required to do last week, Tesco would have dropped the case."

Whoops! In fact, the *Guardian* did apologise several times for its error, and on 16 May it made a formal "offer of amends" whereby it would give Tesco damages and a prominent correction, the wording of which was much the same as that published last week. But Tesco's legal juggernaut thundered on, with Messrs Carter-Fuck in the driving seat, and was brought to a juddering halt only when Mr Justice Eady ruled at the end of July that the *Guardian* could introduce evidence published by the *Eye* proving that Tesco *does* use offshore trusts to avoid corporation tax – which raised the prospect of the company being forced to disclose its other little schemes.

He also put a stay on a barmy separate action against editor Alan Rusbridger for "malicious falsehood", awarded costs to the *Grauniad* and ruled that Tesco must decide by 4.30pm on 15 September whether to accept the paper's offer of amends.

After such a comprehensive defeat, the supermarket had little option but to settle. However, when the deadline for settlement arrived on the afternoon of 15 September there was still no announcement from Tesco and Carter-Fuck – who thus placed themselves technically in contempt of court. It was only in mid-evening, as the paper was about to go to press, that sub-editors were told to clear space for an apology. As part of the settlement both sides have agreed not to discuss their negotiations, but it's clear enough that the Tesco team were in some disarray.

As well they might be. What they had originally demanded was a half-page apology at the top of the front page, surrounded by a black border and personally signed by the editor, exonerating Tesco from *all* allegations of tax avoidance. What they got was essentially what they could have had in mid-May without running up huge legal bills for a further four months. (Presumably the taxing-master will bear this in mind when assessing whether Carter-Fuck's fees are reasonable, especially in view of Eady's scathing comments about the tactics of Carter-Fuck – "no doubt at great expense" – to try to keep the libel case going.)

All this eluded poor Stephen Glover. Yet one of the clues was right under his nose. "The apology was tucked away at the bottom of the front page," he observed with puzzlement, "and continued discreetly on page 32. Why Tesco accepted this downplaying, God only knows."

Could it be because the outcome wasn't quite such an epic victory for Tesco as he supposed? An even bigger clue can be found in the wording of the *Grauniad*'s statement: "We are happy to put the record straight and apologise… We have also agreed to pay a sum by way of damages to a charity of Tesco's choice." Apologies in cases such as this usually refer to "a substantial sum of damages" to emphasise the scale of the plaintiff's triumph, even though the substantial sum may actually be £10,000. The absence of the adjective here implies that, despite all its huffing and puffing and Carter-Fuckery, Tesco probably collected no more than £5,000. Abject indeed!

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

MODELS IN PRADA SHOES KEEP TUMBLING OVER!
BACKSTAGE
GOSH, WHAT'S CAUSING ALL THESE MODELS TO KEEP TUMBLING OVER SO CLUMSILY?
IT MUST BE EITHER THE HEEL, OR THE TOE BIT!
OR MAYBE THE STRAPS?
SNORRT!!

MEDICINE BALLS

Post with care

SHOULD a doctor be suspended from work for calling rheumatology professor and quanqo queen Dame Carol Black a "shit"?

Ian MacKay, a junior surgeon from Raigmore Hospital in Inverness, has just returned from six weeks' gardening leave after a scatological posting on a message board at Doctors.net.uk. His anger was directed at Dame Carol for her role in the "disastrous and unsafe" junior doctor job application fiasco, and the weakness and lack of accountability of medical leadership.

The medical establishment may be weak and unaccountable, but it's also petty and vindictive. The post was spotted by Professor Elisabeth Paice, director of postgraduate medical and dental education at the London Deanery, who contacted Prof Gillian Needham, postgraduate dean at the North of Scotland Deanery. She brought it to the attention of Dr MacKay's employer, NHS Highland, who issued an "indefinite suspension" which was lifted on 16 September.

Prof Paice's justification for reporting MacKay was that his "personal abuse reached such viciousness that it was unprofessional". Paice also pointed out that the General Medical Council includes a section on treating colleagues with respect. This generally applies to working relationships and not the distant abuse of someone you think was partly responsible for stuffing up the careers of thousands of your colleagues. Whether Dr MacKay will be adding a trip to Regent's Place to his CV remains to be seen. Once a doctor is reported to the GMC, for even the most facile reason, the screeners are obliged to look at it.

Ironically (or not), Dame Carol and chief medical officer Sir Liam Donaldson may also be facing a GMC screening. In June, the *Lancet* published a letter calling for the architects of the job fiasco to be reported for gross managerial incompetence. Thus far, the petition has gathered more than 1,600 supporters (www.remedyuk.org). However, when MD asked a GMC council member if any action would be taken, he said: "I've heard nothing about it. But we'd love to see Carol and Liam at the GMC. Carol is automatically a council member, because she's chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges[1]. But she very rarely attends meetings. Liam is allowed to sit in on meetings too, and you'd think as architect of the re-licensing plans for doctors, he'd be keen to find out what we do. But the last time I saw him here was 2006." Clearly, their visit to the GMC is long overdue.

Warty growth

M.D.'s campaign on behalf of parents who want their daughter(s) to be protected from genital warts (very common) as well as cervical cancer (very rare) is not going well. The government has chosen the Ceravix vaccine rather than Gardasil, presumably on grounds of cost although the contract price remains confidential.

Many sexual health experts recommend Gardasil and have given it to their children. As Peter Greenhouse in Bristol puts it: "You'd be mad not to protect your daughter against warts too if you can afford it." One solution would be to offer all parents the choice of topping up with the more expensive vaccine while keeping all girls in the same programme.

However, the NHS vaccine programme does not allow this and parents not only have to pay the full cost of the vaccine, but also have to pay for it to be privately administered (£400 is the price I'm paying for my daughter). So parents choosing a vaccine with wider coverage against disease have to pay through the nose, take their daughters out of school and isolate them from their peer group. Once again, Labour's patient choice mantra doesn't bear scrutiny.

M.D.

[1] Black was re-elected unopposed in 2008, which sparked Dr MacKay's outrage

ROAD RAGE

WORK started last month on a £150m scheme to cut congestion on Birmingham's motorways, including junctions 4 to 5 and 8 to 10A of the M6. But why are taxpayers having to fork out so much less than five years after the opening of a six-lane motorway that was designed to ease congestion on the M6 from junctions 4 to 11?

The answer of course is PFI, or the private finance initiative. For Labour insisted that the "Birmingham Northern Relief Road", now known as the M6 Toll, must be built and operated by a private consortium. The consortium duly sets tolls to maximise profits, keeping its maintenance costs to a minimum with high charges that deter heavy traffic (*Eye* 1096).

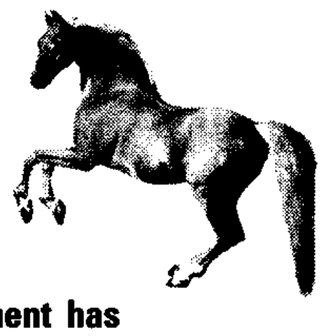
The motorway got through its planning inquiry on the premise that lorry tolls would be £5 and car tolls £2.50 – low enough to divert significant traffic off the M6, it was hoped. In reality lorries and coaches are charged £9 a journey, and cars £4.50; and the new road carries about half its predicted traffic (42,000 vehicles a day versus the 80,000 expected) and brings little "relief" to the bypassed part of the M6. Last year there were as many northbound vehicles on that part of the M6 as there were in the year before the M6 Toll opened (southbound M6 traffic was affected by major roadworks last year) and from junctions 6 to 7 there was 13 percent *more* traffic (65,000 workday vehicles rising to 73,000, northbound only).

Latest figures reveal a 12 percent *fall* in traffic on the M6 Toll from April to June this year (54,000 workday vehicles down to 47,000, both directions combined), compared with the same quarter last year. Parts of the old M6 are now being modified for traffic to use the hard shoulder – "one of the innovative ways in which we can use the existing road network to help drivers beat the jams", according to outgoing transport secretary Ruth Kelly.

Equally innovative would be to abandon the ludicrous PFI principle that money-making takes precedence over meeting the country's strategic needs. But there is little chance of that. In July Kelly announced a £6bn plan to ease jams across England, including possible tolled lanes on congested highways. Groan.

'Hedgehog'

Down on the Farm



AS readers may recall, one of the greatest cock-ups for which even this government has been responsible was the chaos it made of handing out EU farm subsidies under the single farm payment (SFP) scheme. Only because it related to boring old farming was this disaster not more widely highlighted by the media.

Sometimes it is the big picture which conveys how far government madness has gone, but sometimes just the tiniest detail will do. In this case it is the recent experience of David Stevenson who owns 10 acres of fields in North Yorkshire, on which he keeps five horses "for fun".

Because he owns "farmland", without being a farmer, he every year receives a tiny cheque as his single farm payment, followed by sheaves of glossy bumf telling him all about the SFP in incomprehensible bureaucratic prose, at a cost he estimates must be greater than the payment he receives.

Last month he received a letter from "Andy", the "2007 Modulation Manager" of the RPA, telling him that, when he received his 2007 payment, a sum had been deducted for "EU modulation". But after a review, it had been decided that he was due a refund, based on "5 percent of the first 5,000 euros" of his claim. "Under the scheme rules," Andy went on, "there is a national limit on the amount of modulation refunds we can make. This is known as the national ceiling. If the ceiling is reached, a reduction (scale back) applies to all SPS and related scheme payments (related schemes are Area Payment for Nuts, Protein Crop Premium and Aid for Energy Crops").

Then came the exciting bit, where Mr Stevenson anticipated learning what bonanza he could expect. "If the payment you received for your 2007 claim was below 5,000 euros," he read, "your refund will be the value of your claim x 5 percent, less 7.34 percent scale back. The amount of modulation refund will be shown on the remittance advice sent to you separately. The amount you actually receive may be diifferent from the modulation refund as a result of a claim adjustment."

Despite all this giving him the idea that he might look forward to a cheque for as much as 45p, Mr Stevenson waited in vain. He therefore wrote back to "Andy", saying that he could well understand how all this talk of the Area Payment for Nuts, the national ceiling and so forth might leave anyone bemused, and he had every sympathy. He did want to thank "Andy" for his "lovely letter" and for all those "lovely brochures I get from you, so thick and beautifully printed (what a good job our local council collects recycling from the house)". "But actually," he confessed, "I don't understand a chuffing word of it."

'Muckspreader'

ECO-GNOMICS

Ledbury balloon

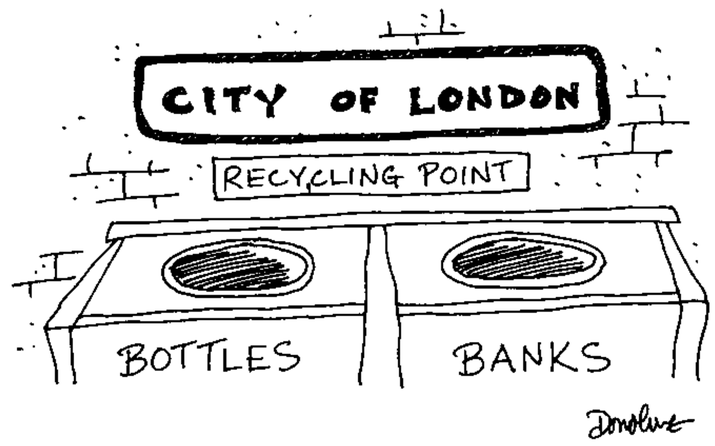
MORE on Ledbury Group (see Eyes 1207 & 1211), the PR outfit set up last year by Nick Bent and Malcolm Gooderham, former spin doctors to political luminaries Tessa Jowell and Michael Portillo respectively.

To the amusement of many environmentalists, Ledbury has recently been trying to portray itself as being at the cutting edge of "corporate responsibility" and "sustainable PR", whatever that is. But how longstanding is his conversion to the world of eco-friendly business?

Gooderham's past clients include Nestlé, a company not yet famed for its visionary approach to environmental stewardship. Other previous beneficiaries of his sage counsel include cosmetics giant L'Oreal and ASDA, well before the latter's recent efforts to green itself up, pushed not by Gooderham but by Wal-Mart, its American owner.

Gooderham once also advised McDonald's, but that was some years before it started to improve its environmental policies, under sustained pressure from campaigners. His CV also trumpets his past work for eco-friendly local neighbour Tesco, as well as famously green business leaders like, well, the oil tycoon Roman Abramovich.

Gooderham's colleague Nick Bent has an equally stellar record in the green movement. For many years he worked on promoting Thames Water, which was repeatedly awarded the honour of being the UK's top polluter and is famous for wasting more water through leakage than any other water company.



ROTTEN BOROUGHS

BLUE PENCIL BLUES

LOCAL newspaper readers across Britain will be reassured to hear that councils have taken to censoring the news they can read.

A fascinating document produced by the department of communities and local government – "Guidance for local authorities on community cohesion planning and tension monitoring" [*sic*] – reveals how Tameside council in Greater Manchester and Berwick-upon-Tweed council in Northumberland have intervened to manipulate the press.

Berwick-upon-Tweed's "crime and disorder reduction partnership is working with the local press/media to vet stories involving migrant workers... employed in the food processing and agricultural sectors to prevent stigmatisation".

Meanwhile, "Tameside holds regular meetings with local newspaper editors to gather information and stop sensationalist reporting which might otherwise start or add to rising tensions," it says. For example, "in response to a Kick Racism Out of Football campaign, an extremist political group wanted to picket a football stadium. A local newspaper was going to run the story on its front page – an action that was likely to bring unwanted publicity to the picket and fuel rising community tensions. The intervention of the Community Cohesion Partnership prevented the story from being run and in the event no one turned out for the picket."

So who were the sinister "extremists"? The BNP? The SWP? The Lib Dems? Tameside council cannot tell us. We think we should be told – not told what to think.

GOULD MINER

ENOUGH private finance initiative schemes have gone pear-shaped (*Eyes ad infinitum*) for the public to be wary of any new ones.

So Liverpudlians were reassured when their city council said it would closely scrutinise plans to demolish and rebuild the Royal Liverpool Hospital with a £477m scheme which could involve PFI.

Back in April, the local Keep Our NHS Public group submitted a detailed briefing calling on the council to "scrutinise the risk of a PFI debt crisis and the impact of cuts". In July, Cllr Ron Gould (Lib Dem) – the grandly titled "executive member for health care & safeguarding" – sent a 4,000-word reply. A 325-word section on PFI began: "PFI has delivered the majority of large hospital developments in the past 10 years or so..." Gould said he "had collated all the information required, so that I can respond fully to the issues you have raised".

Labour councillor Roz Gladden – "chair, health care and safeguarding select committee" – said Gould's reply had been "through scrutiny" on several levels.

By an amazing coincidence, Gould's carefully considered reply was word-for-word identical to an internal response to critics of PFI already circulated to hospital staff by the NHS trust – in fact, all 4,000 words of it were lifted from trust documents.

Scrutiny? More like cut-and-paste plagiarism!

MAXIMISING PROPHET

FOUR MONTHS into his term of office, the mayor of Tower Hamlets has decided to change his name.

The politician formerly known as "Mohammed Abdus Salique" has issued an edict proclaiming that he is to be known as "Muhammad Abdullah Salique". Council officials will have to change stationery letterheads and the mayoral name-board in the town hall.

This is not Cllr Salique's first change of identity. In May he ordered the council's press office to "remind" hacks that his name was "Mohammed Abdus Salique" and not the plain "Abdus Salique" he had hitherto been happy with.

ECO DOWN

THE property slump makes developer Parkridge's plans for an "eco-town" of 15,000 ticky-tacky boxes at Weston Otmoor in Oxfordshire (*Eyes passim*) look more fantastical by the day – aptly so, given that the landscape that would be destroyed was the inspiration for parts of *Alice in Wonderland.*

Even Tory Oxfordshire county council is against it. On his "leader's blog" last week, council leader Keith Mitchell dismissed the developer's claims that the eco-town would create thousands of new jobs.

"We want to see properly planned and realistic job creation," he wrote. "We are actively supporting major new economic development at Bicester, which could bring huge benefits to people there. 'Wotmoor', as Private Eye has dubbed it, threatens that."

Cllr Mitchell is now an Eye reader, it seems. Two years ago, a constituent concerned about a planning approval to dump power station waste at a beauty spot wrote to him and quoted a Rotten Boroughs story. Mitchell responded angrily: "I am afraid reading trashy literature like Private Eye is always dangerous in that it might encourage trashy thinking" (*Eye* 1166). Nice to have you on board, Keith!

● OVER in Woodstock (pop. 2,924), the new mayor is upset about traffic jams on the A44 caused by the annual game fair at Blenheim Palace. The two days of "chaos" were a "catastrophe", Cllr Peter Jay said last week. Indeed, it was a "grave violation of the public's rights and welfare". The game fair might have to be banned unless the traffic was sorted out. Blimey!

But you probably would feel that way if the A44 went past the end of your road. And one must expect strong opinions from a former British ambassador to Washington, economics editor of the BBC and chief of staff to the late Cap'n Bob Maxwell! For this Jay, it is he.

An exciting career move, then, for the man once tipped as a future world leader by *Time* magazine. What next? Might Radio Oxford hire him to do the traffic news?

Advertisement

Does public consultation work?
YOU DECIDE!

YES ☐ NO ☐

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UK GOVERNMENT

✓Helping you to make the right choice...

THE DEAD DUCK

MORE on the government's new deal for communities (NDC) programme, aimed at regenerating run-down areas.

An NDC in a deprived district of Derby thought a good way to spend £366,000 of public money was to take over the local pub and refurbish it. So, in 2004, the lease to the Blue Boy was transferred to Derwent Delivers, an arm of a public body set up to supervise the spending of £42m over 10 years.

Next month, however, the lease will be handed back to the Blue Boy's owners after the pub lost £150,000 in four years. Before the takeover, locals warned that the pub had a bad name for drug-dealing and violence, and they continued to give it the cold shoulder despite the refurbishment.

It's not the only Derwent NDC project to lose money. Three years ago it ploughed £900,000 into the "Derventio heritage village", a "Viking" tourist attraction complete with "Roman" fort, "Saxon" houses and "Celtic" huts which opened in July 2006. Alas, the marauding hordes of tourists failed to descend and it closed in February 2007.

TALE OF THE TAPES

TAPES released by the emergency services following the drowning of seven-year-old Michelle Gellard at the Blackwater Leisure Centre in Maldon, Essex, in June (*Eye* 1216) reveal that inaccurate and incomplete information was given by the centre's staff.

The conversations have been posted on the website of solicitors Hodge Jones & Allan, who are suing operators Leisure Connection (*Eyes passim*) on behalf of Michelle's parents. LC runs the pool for Maldon district council.

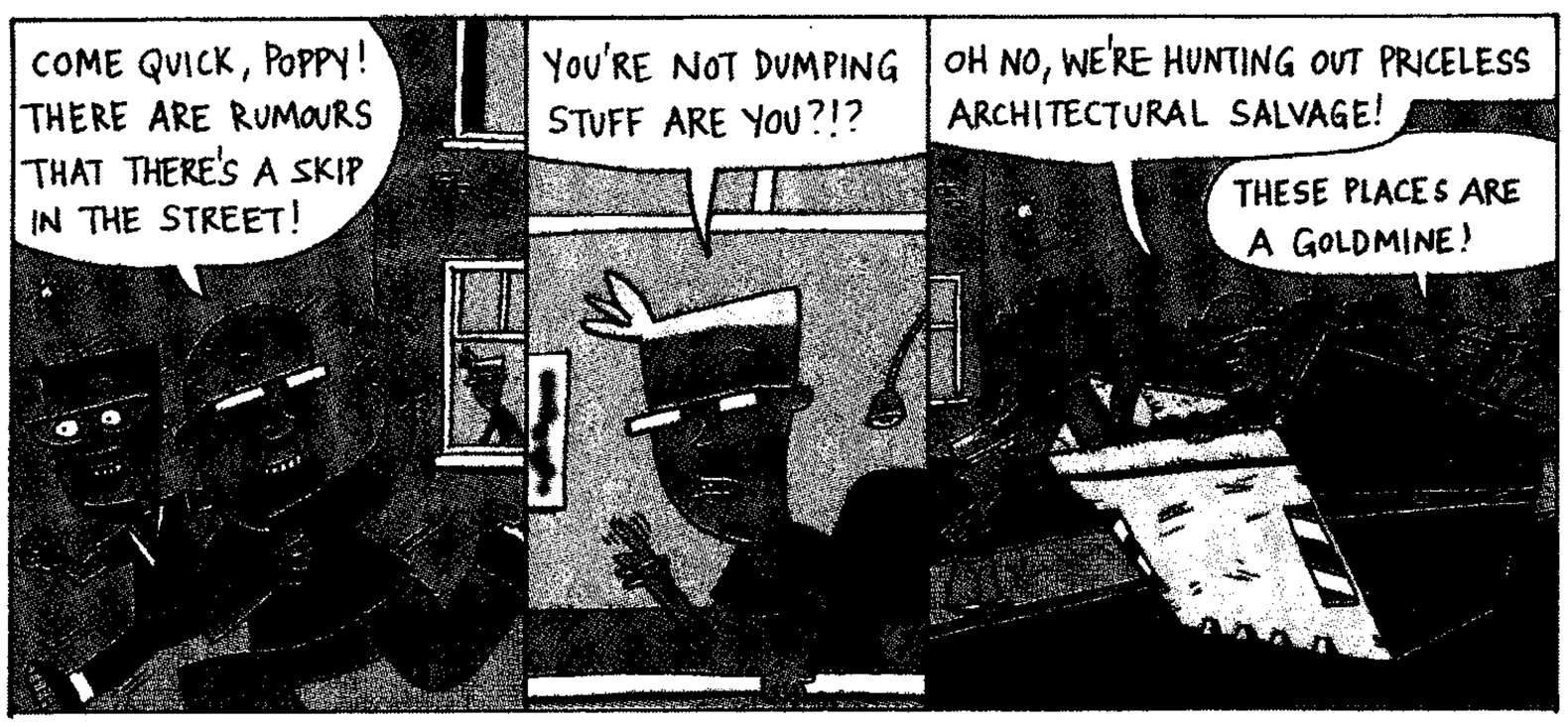
In the first 999 call, a member of Leisure Connection tells the operator that Michelle is "OK" and "conscious", when in fact she never regained consciousness. No mention of drowning was made in the call. As a result of this misinformation the ambulance service downgraded their response, leading to a possibly fatal delay.

In a second call, asking where the paramedics are, it is made clear that there is no defibrillator at the pool and there are no staff present who are qualified to resuscitate young children.

Michelle's parents' solicitors are calling on the Health and Safety Executive to review its decision only to investigate the involvement of the council, which owns the pool, rather than inquire into any deficiencies of Leisure Connection. They claim only a fully independent investigation can avoid conflicts of interest.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

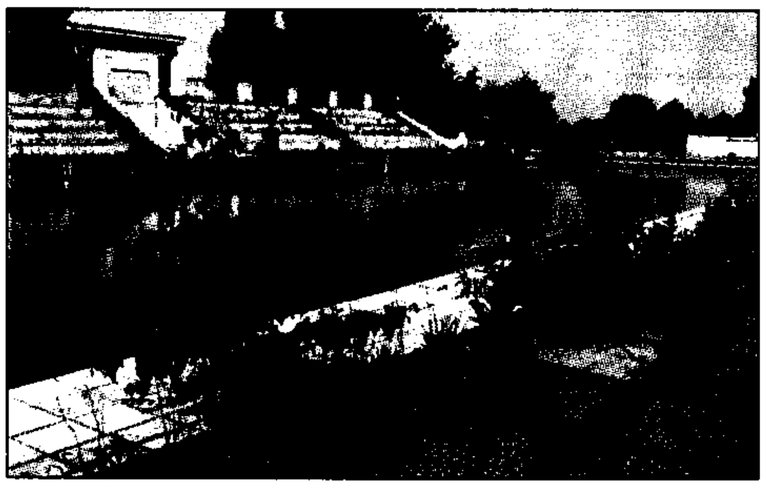
KNIFE & PACKER


COME QUICK, POPPY! THERE ARE RUMOURS THAT THERE'S A SKIP IN THE STREET!
YOU'RE NOT DUMPING STUFF ARE YOU?!?
OH NO, WE'RE HUNTING OUT PRICELESS ARCHITECTURAL SALVAGE!
THESE PLACES ARE A GOLDMINE!

NOOKS and CORNERS

IN AN attempt to atone for the crazy sums of public money being poured into the London Olympics, Andy Burnham, the culture, media 'n' sport secretary, has said there will be free swimming for all by 2012. Furthermore, under the "Legacy Action Plan", £60m has been committed to help councils maintain and refurbish existing swimming pools.

All of this may be regarded with a degree of cynicism in Ipswich, where the Broomhill Pool Trust has just had its application to the heritage lottery fund (HLF) to refurbish and reopen the eponymous lido (see picture) rejected. Perhaps the HLF's resources are again being squeezed in favour of contractors and architects in Hackney, but the



campaign to restore this much loved and once much used Olympic-size open-air pool has also effectively been sabotaged by Ipswich borough council.

The lido at Broomhill on the western side of Ipswich was opened in 1938. Fifty-five yards long, it has a grandstand and entrance pavilion (originally with clock-tower), all designed in a modernistic manner in reinforced concrete by E. McLauchlan. In 2001 the pool was listed, at grade II, but by then it was in poor shape. Although used by some 50,000 swimmers during its opening seasons throughout the 1990s, it suffered – like many pools – from inadequate maintenance by the local authority.

In 2002 Ipswich borough council claimed that the Broomhill Pool ran at an annual loss of £60,000 and closed it at the end of that year's season. However, the swimmers of Ipswich fought back and set up the friends of Broomhill Pool, which became the Broomhill Pool Trust in 2003. A survey conducted that year in Ipswich found that 88 percent of respondents favoured saving the pool; and two years later the council pledged £1m towards it on condition that the balance – some £2m to £3m – could be raised elsewhere.

The Broomhill Pool Trust worked hard to raise money and encourage interest in reopening the lido. Among its supporters is the MP Kate Hoey, a former sports minister. Earlier this year she said that she could not "speak highly enough of the dedicated group of volunteers campaigning to save Broomhill Lido… The heritage lottery fund was set up exactly for this kind of project and I do hope they will be successful."

But they weren't. The application for £1.9m to restore the pool (and replace the heating system removed during the Second World War) was rejected by the HLF as "too high risk" without "greater commitment" from Ipswich council.

Why isn't the council committed? In fact it is much more committed to what might be perceived as a "rival" bid to secure HLF funding to restore and improve Holywells Park in Ipswich, even though this is being tried under the government's "Parks for the People" programme – and there is no swimming pool in the park. In March, Ipswich council approved a grant of more than £2.2m for Holywells Park – an estate gifted to Ipswich in 1935 and which the council ought to have been maintaining anyway. It seems irresponsible that a similar commitment is not made to Broomhill.

The Broomhill Pool Trust is fighting on – and good luck to it. In her book *Liquid Assets* – from which I take my picture – Janet Smith quotes the famous swimming pool architect Kenneth M.B. Cross writing that: "Fresh air, sunlight, exercise and companionship are essential to the fullness of life, and the provision of the necessary facilities is not a luxury; it is an urgent and ever insistent national need…" This is still true today. Why can't sports minister Burnham intervene?

IN ADDITION to caring about the health of the nation, our government is also deeply concerned about education – with even more disastrous consequences architecturally.

Thanks to the promotion of academies and the use of the private finance initiative, hundreds of good, sound school buildings – 20th- as well as 19th-century – are being abandoned and demolished when they could be retained or converted for other purposes [Eyes passim]. Liverpool, for instance, has lost almost all its Board Schools. And now – in this "year of culture" so assiduously promoted by its council at the expense of the city's main asset: historic buildings – it has lost another.

The Beaufort Street School in Toxteth, built in 1873-74, was a large and little-altered example of the type, and was sufficiently distinguished as a Gothic Revival building to be listed at grade II in 2000. But when the school was closed, Liverpool council did nothing to protect it. The inevitable vandalism culminated in a destructive fire which left it roofless. To make the building safe, it was partially demolished. It is scarcely surprising that it was then de-listed, but now the remains of the school are to be taken down.

As the Victorian Society comments: "Beaufort Street School need never have got into this state if the council had secured the building properly and sought a new use for it when the school moved out. Victorian schools like this are very adaptable and durable. The building could have played a valuable part in the regeneration of the Toxteth area. Instead it is a sad symbol of the way the people in the community have been let down". Quite.

'Piloti'

This was proof positive that men could multi-task, even in adverse conditions...

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

LAST weekend saw the launch of the luvvies' beano that will be the Cultural Olympiad: a cerebral, artistic celebration to run alongside the sweaty brawn 'n' biceps version that will dominate our lives in 2012.

Although the funding allocated to this culturefest is a fraction of the squillions being spent to keep Sebastian Coe busy in his retirement, it is still £40m so the public is entitled to know it's in reliable hands.

However, since the hands in question are those of Ms Jude Kelly – stage director, South Bank Centre boss and all-round person of power in the British arts, as well as chair of the Olympic cultural events – there's cause for concern.

As the *Eye* reported not long ago, Ms Kelly has never believed that her role at the South Bank is any bar to awarding herself commissions for the staging of shows there. In August she directed a feeble *Wizard of Oz* that might just have passed muster as the Christmas panto at the West Yorkshire Playhouse (where she'd previously staged it) but not in the middle of summer in a large London venue.

Many of those around her foresaw disaster and tried to talk her out of it. But she stood firm and drove the project through at all costs – to appalling notices and empty houses. Worse still, readers of entertainment websites were surprised to find an avalanche of laughably glowing *Wizard* reviews that were traced back to a computer just along the corridor from Ms Kelly's office.

If that wasn't bad enough, an extraordinary piece appeared in the *Sunday Times* the other week in which the South Bank (ie Kelly) insisted the *Wizard* had played to 57 percent houses. This is not remotely true. The show in fact played to 57 percent of the capacity made available for the selling of seats. And as Kelly closed off the entire balcony to disguise the emptiness of the Festival Hall, the true figure is much lower – low enough to land the South Bank with a loss of half a million pounds.

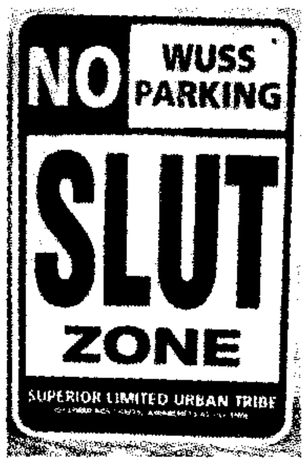
● The Royal Opera House has asked us to point out that the reference in the last *Eye* to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as a generous funder of the *Sun* readers' special at Covent Garden should have made it clear that though the event was labelled a "*Paul* Hamlyn First Night" it was in fact funded by the *Helen* Hamlyn Trust, Helen being Paul's widow.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

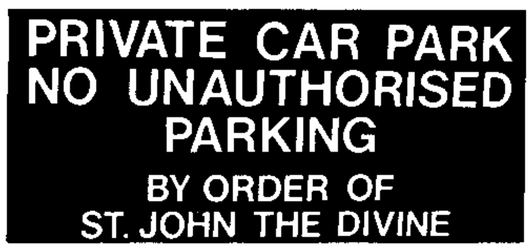
It's an incredibly spiritual experience, standing amidst those huge, powerful paintings, and quietly meditating...
TATE MODERN
ROTHKO
..on how much they're worth.

I-SPY



Bergen
Submitted by J. Bourne

Delhi
Submitted by P. McKegney



Richmond
Submitted by R.Bennett

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

THE EU has always been obsessed with the collection and exchange of data. However, whereas Labour's surveillance measures in the UK can at least be scrutinised in public and parliament, EU decisions are often made in secret.

A visible result of one such measure will be coming soon to a passport office near you: collection of fingerprints as a "biometric identifier" in travel documents. Needless to say, the dabs will be held on a database and shared with other EU (and possibly non-EU) states.

Now the European Commission is preparing plans that will see Brussels extend its reach over personal data still further. The proposals will take as their inspiration a report by the Future Group, a shadowy collection of interior ministers not even representing all EU countries. A new analysis by voluntary watchdog Statewatch shows how far the amassing and tracking of data could go.

Thanks to technology, "public security organisations will have access to almost limitless amounts of potentially useful information", the Future Group gleefully notes. The report gives six types of information that could be "managed" to begin with: DNA, fingerprints, ballistics, car registrations, phone numbers and civil registry entries. But this is just the start – the Future Group says a further 43 types of information could be shared and tracked. You have been warned!

EU-phemisms

Pot... kettle... er...

Letters

Good old days

Sir,

Since our local Post Office was shut by the government, the elderly, infirm and disabled now have to crawl, stagger or hitch-hike along a narrow and dangerous lane to the nearest one some three miles away.

It was while standing in the queue there that I saw an old man leaning on his zimmer frame with a dewdrop on the end of his nose from the cold, waiting to collect his pension so that he could buy some firelighters and bread and Marmite.

Obviously nostalgic about the halcyon days of wartime plenty, he suddenly burst into song, parodying that old popular classic known to all:

Gordon has only got one ball
Darling has two but very small
Miliband has got them in his hand
But poor old Ed Balls has no balls at all

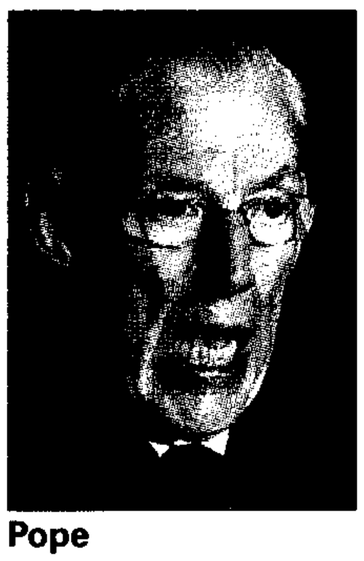
At this, we all joined in, tapping our walking sticks and coughing percussively. This was followed by much nostalgic reflection about the Good Old Days, when community spirit, thriving local pubs and shops and general good humour were found everywhere.

Those were the days.
ARTHUR KING,

(Under) The Bridge, Bard's Castle, Cornwall.

Lookalike

Paisley



Pope

Sir,

Could Ian Paisley be a reincarnation of the Pope Innocent X as seen by Francis Bacon (after Velasquez)?

ENA B. ANONYMOUS,

Via email.

Ratty reply

Sir,

Salmond Stakes (Eye 1219).

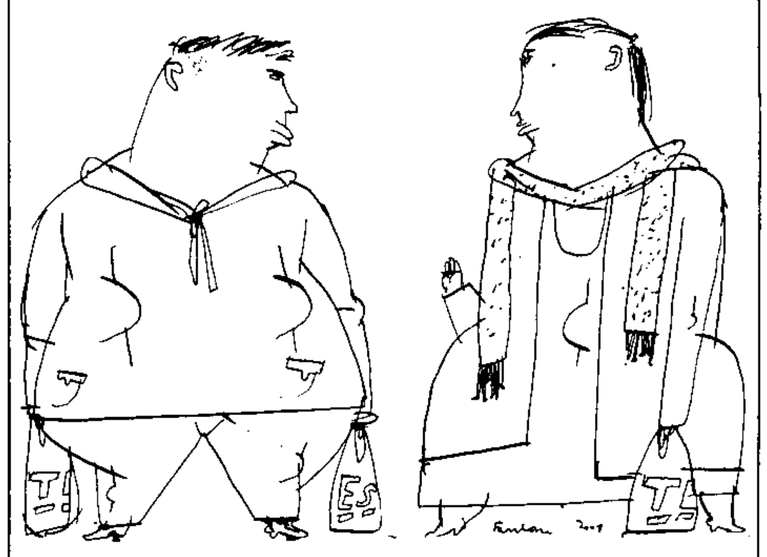
Sorry to spoil Ratbiter's fun but his attempt to pin a scandal on Alex Salmond on the issue of the Scottish Islamic Foundation not only contains inaccuracies but is also two weeks out of date.

*The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations has not condemned the Scottish Government for giving £400,000 to the Scottish Islamic Foundation. The article in **Third Force News** from which my words were extracted was in fact a defence of the Scottish Islamic Foundation from the paranoid insinuations of the Centre for Social Inclusion. The questions which I raised about the funding process were substantially answered by Audit Scotland two weeks ago.*

STEPHEN MAXWELL,

Associate Director, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, Edinburgh.

Scenes You Seldom See



"You know what, Karen? I could really murder a small tub of low-fat yoghurt"

History lessons

Sir,

*Your correspondent Sean Kavanagh's reference to "the insane and patently historically unreliable ramblings of The Venerable Bede" (Letters, Eye 1219) proceeds from the invincible assurance of complete ignorance. Those of us who have studied the works of Bede, have written about them and attended conferences about their author (of which a notable example was held in Durham in July), are impressed alike by his learning and his good judgement. Helen Waddell, of good memory, in her famous study of the medieval lyric, "The Wandering Scholars" (7th ed. 1934) referred to him as "the **massif** of English scholarship". Distinguished scholars count it an honour to be invited to deliver the annual Jarrow lecture on Bede and his life and works, given in St Paul's Church, Jarrow, on or near his feast day. He is famous as a Christian teacher; as an historian; and as an Englishman, and well deserves his title: "the father of English history".*

Yours faithfully,
PROFESSOR GERALD BONNER,

Durham City.

Sir,

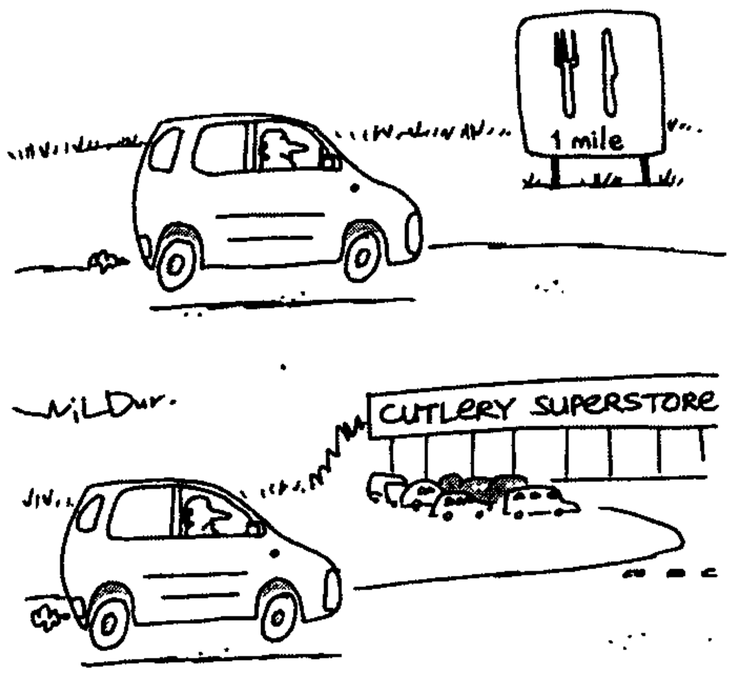
I find it a shame that both Sean Kavanagh (Letters, Eye 1219) and the Eye have missed the point about teaching history: it's not all about the content (Black or White, establishment or marginalised) but making students challenge preconceptions and making them think carefully before accepting ideas called facts. The likes of Keith Jenkins, Richard Evans, E.H. Carr and Peter Lee make it abundantly clear history cannot be taught in a cultural vacuum; what the national curriculum tries to do in its current form is equip students in their thinking processes to "sow the seeds of doubt" with concepts such as interpretation, enquiry and significance.

So if everyone's history is someone else's history it doesn't matter if you are learning about Churchill, Equiano, Amos Marley or Algernon Spratt, what is important is being able to place things in context. The Eye may find the curriculum unravelling if it doesn't teach the same things it learned in the establishment schools of the '50s and '60s and Mr Kavanagh may find that a terrible slur on the history he feels ought to be taught, but that's the price to be paid when a flexible curriculum is created for those who know how to progress students in the best way possible: the history teachers.

Yours faithfully,
ALEX ALCOE,

Via email.

PS: The point about the holocaust being ubiquitous in the curriculum was a bit supercilious, it's only mandatory in key stage 3 – the number you missed out, and probably not on purpose!



Business as usual

Sir,

Though it is true that auditors BDO Stoy Hayward would have insisted that XL's 2006 directors' report included the statement that the directors had "taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any information needed by the company's auditors for the purposes of their audit and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information", it is untrue that this insistence was or is unusual as Slicker states (Eye 1219). This statement is a legal requirement under the Companies Act for financial periods beginning on or after 1 April 2005.

I am not proud of the subject matter of this letter.

Yours in shame,
JONATHAN NENDICK,

Via email.

Stupid question

Sir,

Sometimes in Dumb Britain the questions are as bad as the answers. "Which English queen rode a chariot with knives on the wheels?" The correct answer would be "None of them." Assuming the expected answer was Boudicca, she wasn't English as she lived before the creation of England as a nation; whether she was a queen in any sense which we would recognise is debatable; and she didn't have knives on the wheels of her chariot. That was exposed as a myth years ago. If the question setters can't get it right, what hope do the contestants have?

LIZ MORDUE,

Bedford.

Lunchtime O'Snob?

Sir,

I saw the performance of Don Giovanni (Music & Musicians, Eye 1219) and I enjoyed it.

I dare say, by the standards of "Lunchtime O'Boulez", that my aftershave is of poorer quality than he is used to. I checked, and indeed my tie is made from crimplene. When sneering at my humble state what does that make him?

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT MACDONALD,

Bristol.

Wasting police time?

Sir,

So amusing did I find Heath's cartoon on page 18 of issue 1219 that I used it in a presentation about police bureaucracy.

If you complain, I'll fit you up with something once I've done this paperwork and filled in a few more pointless forms.

Yours,
PC DAVID NOLAN,

PPO Liaison T29483.

Care needed

Sir,

I usually enjoy Tony Husband's Yobs and Yobettes cartoons, but the strip in 1219 was objectionable. The last frame has a yobette telling the yob that for the last few years she has been in a psychiatric hospital, equating this with the care homes, prisons, and borstals of the previous frame. Could you please treat mental illness with a little more care in future?

DAVID FARMBROUGH,

Via email.

Bookseller's darling

Sir,

To be fair, Lord Dickie's book signing in Richmond was far removed from your Snipcock & Tweed depiction (Eye 1219), a cheerful and amiable affair.

What was so admirable was that he chose not a large department store bookshop but "The Open Book", one of those delightful smaller independent booksellers seriously threatened now but which manages to survive despite being within spitting distance of a three-floor Waterstone's. Erudite locals like Lord Dickie often make it their first choice when they are seeking a tome, which helps.

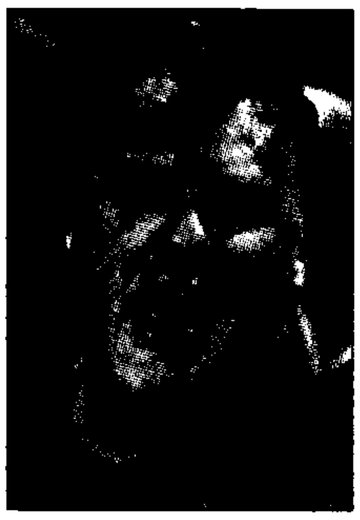
Long may this continue.

Yours faithfully,
RODNEY BENNETT,

Richmond, Surrey.

Lookalike

Terfel



Balls

Sir,

Please print this one, it would make me insanely happy.

IRENA BARKER,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"They all looked around scratching each other's head."
GERRY ARMSTRONG, Sky Sports
(Phil Dennett)

"Zola can relieve himself now he's 3-0 up."
CHARLIE NICHOLAS, Sky Sports
(Marco Gardin)

"Anelka was deliberately brought down in the box: anywhere else on the pitch and it would have been a penalty!"
SCOTT BOOTH, Setanta
(John McCready)

"The toe is the Achilles' heel of the foot."
RON JAWORSKI, Sky Sports
(David Gilborn)

"And that goal has quite literally set the Stade Vélodrome on fire."
CLIVE TYLDESLEY
(Lewis Cooper)

Pedantry Corner

... Bob Richman (Pedantry Corner, Eye 1219) is wrong to say that the Countess of Abingdon is only a courtesy title applying to the Earl's wife. Most Scottish and some English peerages can pass to a female heir, so Lara Croft could indeed be a countess in her own right. I understand she was at Gordonstoun so the title may well be Scottish. I'll have to check Debrett's.

JAMES COPE.

... Re: Cartoon "Look everyone – the Red Arrows!" (Eye 1219). Enjoyed the historical humour but, as even the youngest planespotter knows, one more red arrow was needed to make it truly authentic! Or perhaps the MoD's next cost saving plan has been leaked...

JOHN ROBERTSON.

... Like the lady featured in your recent, "Scenes you seldom see", I am an elderly housewife with a passing interest in the plumbing trade, and in order to avoid being included in your Pedantry Corner, I will highlight only the serious errors made. First, there is no such thing as a "coupler" in plumbing, it is always a "coupling". Second, the fitting that the dear lady was referring to was a 28mm equal ***yorkshire*** *tee. A "ring" tee doesn't exist.*

Do *try to keep up.*

TONI UPSALL.

... Thaksin Shinawatra was an elected prime minister, as Roger Ward says (Pedantry Corner, Eye 1218), but the Eye's use of the term "dictator" is closer to the character of the man than Roger Ward would have your readers believe. He openly admired Robert Mugabe; he presided over a brief reign of terror when he launched an unregulated crackdown on the drugs trade that led to several thousand deaths, including those of innocent men women and children; he sought the removal of journalists and programmes that dared to criticise him; he silenced the auditor general when she started looking into his tax affairs and suspicious financial dealings; he corrupted all the institutions that are supposed to protect against executive abuse by populating them with family and friends.

ANDY STEWART.

... So there were hoards (sic) of up-market journos at the Royal Opera's "anti-gala" (Music & Musicians, Eye 1219). No doubt they were gathering up all the freebies. Not a bad collective noun. A hoard of journos.

HARRY NUTTALL.

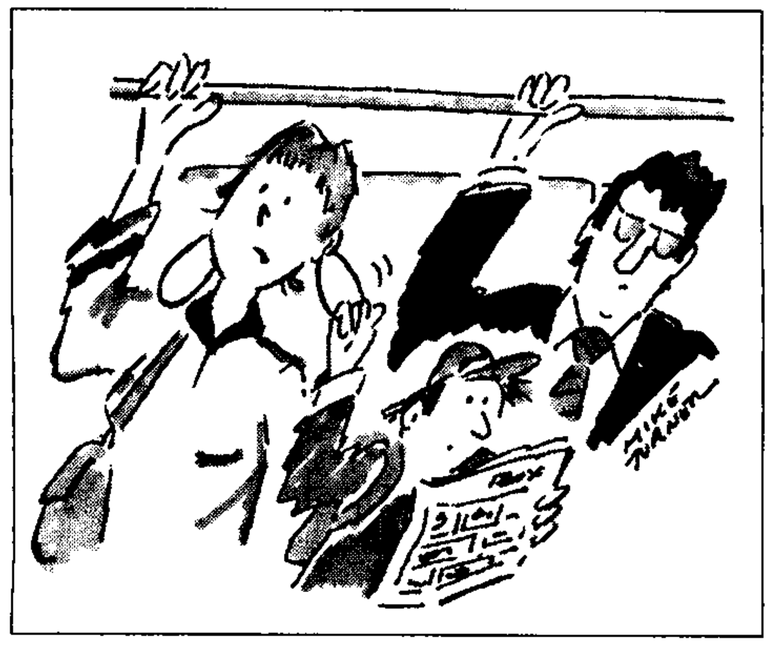
Fan mail

Sir,

I totally agree with Carl Isleunited (Eye 1210) – the names of your correspondents in these letter columns should be honest and truthful, and not pseudonymously supportive of their local football teams. Nip this annoying trend in the bud immediately!

DON CASTERROVERS,

Via email.



Letter from **South Africa**

from Our Own Correspondent

SEX, though no one in South Africa will mention this, is at the root of our bizarre political crisis. Ultimately the blame lies (again) with Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, though in the smog of self-righteous, pseudo-Marxist rhetoric billowing from viciously fratricidal African National Congress (ANC) factions, most here have forgotten that.

Thabo Mbeki has been sacked as president ("recalled" in ANC-speak), so his hated rival ("close comrade" in party-speak) Jacob Zuma can take over after next year's general election. Yet the trouble started with gossip about Mbeki's sex life.

Winnie had written to Mbeki in 2001 to patch up relations and entrusted this missive to a go-between – Zuma. When Winnie's eccentric epistle found its way into print, replete with references to presidential priapism, the hyper-paranoid Mbeki jumped to political conclusions.

Almost immediately Zuma, deputy president at the time, announced to a puzzled nation that he had no presidential ambitions. We now know this was to avoid being accused of plotting to overthrow the comrade president. Curiously, the three actually fingered as "plotters" were the main rivals to Mbeki within the ANC.

Since 2005, when Mbeki finally fired Zuma for being embroiled in a corruption case, both have been slugging it out in the courts. Zuma claims Mbeki abused the law to pursue political vendettas. He's probably right. It was the recent court judgment to that effect that finally did for Mbeki – with the trio named in that baseless "plot" (Cyril Ramaphosa, Tokyo Sexwale, Mathews Phosa) jostling to plunge in the fatal dagger.

So is Zuma's way now clear to the presidency? Er, not quite.

First, this remains a prudish society. What worries many S'Effricans of all hues, increasingly blasé about corruption, is less Zuma's personal financial incontinence than his rape case – and the fact that he had unprotected sex with an HIV-positive girl who called him "uncle". Zuma recently married his fourth wife in a blaze of publicity, yet uxorious respectability eludes him. Although he was found not guilty of rape, the stickiness of tacky sex with the daughter of a dead comrade lingers.

Second, Mbeki is said to have waited up to 30 years to settle scores with "comrades" who crossed him in any way during the years of exile. He'll strike back. Last week, by announcing the resignation of finance minister Trevor Manuel (who had already informed the Zuma camp that he would stay on), Mbeki got revenge by wiping millions off the stock exchange in the hours before the statement was reversed.

Third, the only thing that united the Zuma rebels – like Tory plotters against Margaret Thatcher – was a common loathing for an autocratic president. Now that Zuma has served his purpose, some who backed him are now ready to discard him like an old condom (which, of course, we know Comrade Zuma doesn't use).

Fourth, interim president Kgalema Motlanthe, generally hailed as morally upright, has allies in all ANC factions. He has six months to establish himself.

The ANC is hopelessly split. When Fikile Mbalula, a member of the party's national executive, was dispatched to Cape Town to investigate allegations of vote-rigging in local branches, he was promptly waylaid by the two most controversial regional ANC leaders, who forcibly took him off for a long-delayed initiation ceremony into manhood, ie circumcision (aged 36!). Thus Mbalula was incommunicado last week when the Western Cape ANC conference elected new leaders in bitterly contested elections. Oh… and in the scuffle to have the reluctant apparatchik circumcised, the "snipper" lost his mobile phone.

Mbeki's biographer admitted that the question he's most asked about the deposed prez is: was he circumcised? In a tradition-bound society, this stuff can be important. In Xhosa culture, unless you've been snipped you ain't a man.

So it's not always the economy, stupid. Sometimes it's the foreskin.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"Over ten thousand people go dancing in this city every weekend," Stef van Dongen told reporters at Club Watt in Rotterdam, "and they care about the environment just as much as anyone else. An average nightclub uses over 150 times as much electrical power as a normal household, but it doesn't have to be that way. When you dance, you generate a lot of energy by shaking the ground, and we've developed a way to capture the movement of dancing people, and transform it into electrical energy. It's all part of the Sustainable Dance Club concept, or SDC.

"We use a technology called electromagnetic induction. It's a simple idea, involving a

network of springs and magnets that are embedded in the dance floor, and convert downward movement mechanically into electrical energy. We didn't want the floor to be too bouncy, otherwise dancers might be thrown off balance, so it has a give of about one centimetre, which is enough to generate 5 to 10 watts of electricity per dancer. Our eco-club requires about 2,000 people dancing at once to keep all the lights on, without any need for additional power.

"As well as harnessing solar and wind power, and collecting rainwater for the plumbing, the SDC concept also entitles us to re-use lost clothing as insulation. We did also try out a plan to collect clubbers' sweat, and use it to flush the toilets. But that proved impractical when we realised it would take two days of energetic dancing by 30,000 people to enable one flush." *(Der Spiegel, 18/8/08. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*

– o –

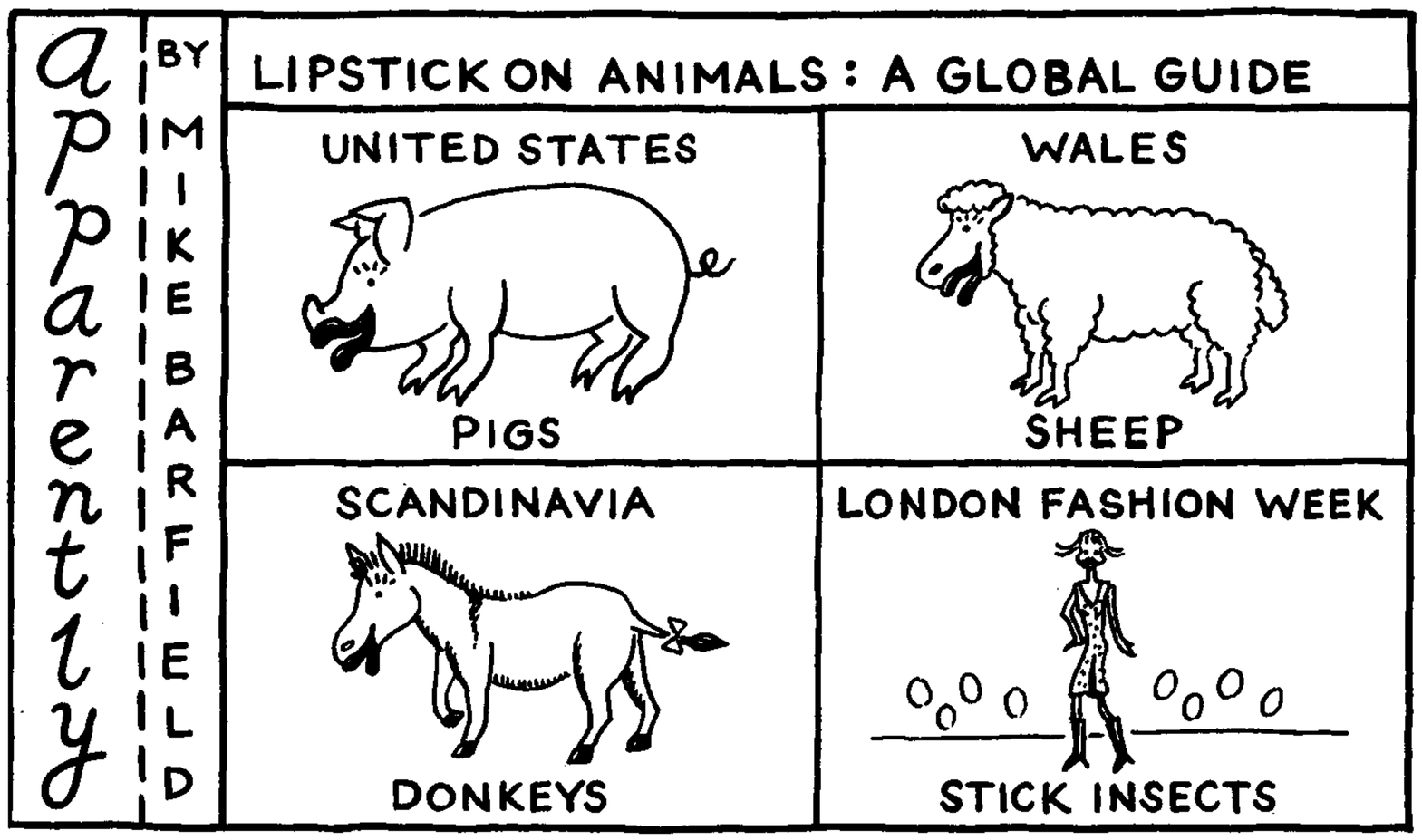
"I'd been drinking all afternoon before the mugger attacked me," twenty-five-stone Rolf Mittelhaus told reporters in Dortmund, "so I didn't really know what was going on at the time. I remember him demanding money and brandishing a gun, and I heard a loud bang, but I didn't see a flash, and I didn't feel any pain. A couple of days later, I thought that I ought to report the theft of my wallet to the police, and they suggested that I should have a medical examination, just in case I'd been injured. That's when I found out that I'd been shot in the chest."

A police spokesman later explained that "a doctor discovered the bullet, stuck in rolls of fat around Mr Mittelhaus's stomach. It had barely pierced the skin, and just fell out during the routine examination. The shot would probably have been fatal if Mr Mittelhaus had been slimmer, but the rolls of fat around his body had simply smothered the bullet and absorbed the impact. So on this occasion, morbid obesity proved to be a life-saver." (Austrian Times, 8/9/08. Spotter: Anon)

– o –

"Number One Plus condom lubricant is the most effective cure for acne I've ever tried," twenty-nine-year-old street vendor Tep Kemyoeurn told reporters in Phnom Penh. "After I used it for three days, all my acne dried up and went away. It's excellent. Thousands of women here use it, and get a really good result. You just wipe the lubricated condoms on your face every night, and within three or four days your acne disappears like it was magic! My aunty and my youngest sister use it too. And if you tell the foreign nurses that you are a sex worker, they give you as many lubricated condoms as you want."

The water-based lubricant and condoms are distributed free throughout Cambodia as part of an AIDS prevention programme by Population Services International (a health organisation partly funded by the British Government). "I tried many kinds of medicine for acne, but none of them had any effect," another woman told reporters. "Then my friends at the garment factory where I work told me about Number One Plus, so I told the health workers that I was a prostitute, and they gave me a big boxful. Now I use it every night, and my skin stays clear." *(Kampuchea Thmey, 28/8/08. Spotter: Roger Pebody)*



PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 28

Comrade Mrs Brown writes:

It is my privilege this week to introduce the Supreme Leader's Decree.

No one knows the Supreme Leader better than I do and when I tell you that the Supreme Leader is the Supremest Leader that you could ever wish to meet, I assure you that I speak from the heart – and not from this piece of paper that has been given to me by the Supreme Leader. I am really proud to be closely associated with the Supreme Leader on a whole range of fronts viz having breakfast with him in the morning, taking the children to school and preparing the dinner when he comes home from Supremely Leading the country. And so without any further ado I will hand you over to the Supreme Leader himself.

READERS ARE ASKED TO STAND AND APPLAUD FOR SEVERAL HOURS WHILE THEY READ THROUGH THE FOLLOWING EDITED HIGHLIGHTS OF HIS FIVE-HOUR ORATION TO THE PARTY CONGRESS IN MARXCHESTER.

The Leader enters to the sound of not very solemn music... "Things can only get worse" by N:Ightmare

" I know who I am. I know who you are. And I know where you live *(Applause)*. I belong to Glasgow. Dear old Glasgow Town *(Applause)*. But today we face a global challenge and I know deep in my heart that I am the only man who can deal with it. So I am offering a **new settlement**. And I'll start by settling a few scores *(Applause)*. This is not a job for a **novice.** Not a job for some Tory twit called David! *(Audience laugh and look at Miliband.)* No! I have a dream *(Applause)*. And my dream is of a fair society where people are not unfair to someone just because they have made a few mistakes *(Applause)*. **Regrets**? Yes, I've had a few. But then again, too few to mention *(Applause)*. Apart from the 10p tax business, which really hurt me because people thought I was not on their side *(Takes out onion)*. But this isn't about **you**, it's about **me** *(Applause)*.

As I said, we face a financial crisis such as the world has never seen *(Applause)*. But rest assured, it was not **my** fault and it will never happen again – thanks to measures that Comrade Darlling and I will be putting in place as soon as we have thought up what they are *(Applause)*. You know that I am a man for detail. So I support Comrade President Bush's scheme to save capitalism – whatever the details! *(Applause)*

So much for the financial crisis. But now I would like to announce some other measures to win back those of our supporters who have been tempted by the empty promises of Osbornist neo-Govist Cameronism *(Applause)*. As of today **I** promise:

- Free cancer drugs for all members of our Armed Forces to be available from Post Offices and Olympic venues by 2020 *(Applause)*.
- Free wind-powered laptops to be handed out to all hardworking two-year-olds over the age of ten *(Applause)*.
- Worldwide peace and justice for every citizen of the planet from Rwanda to Darfur to Glenrothes – and if I help just one person, from one family, in one community in Britain – and that person is myself – then it will all have been worthwhile *(Standing ovation)*.

Let us all join together and sing *The Brown Flag*:

♫ *Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,* ♪ "
The Supreme Leader will still be here next year

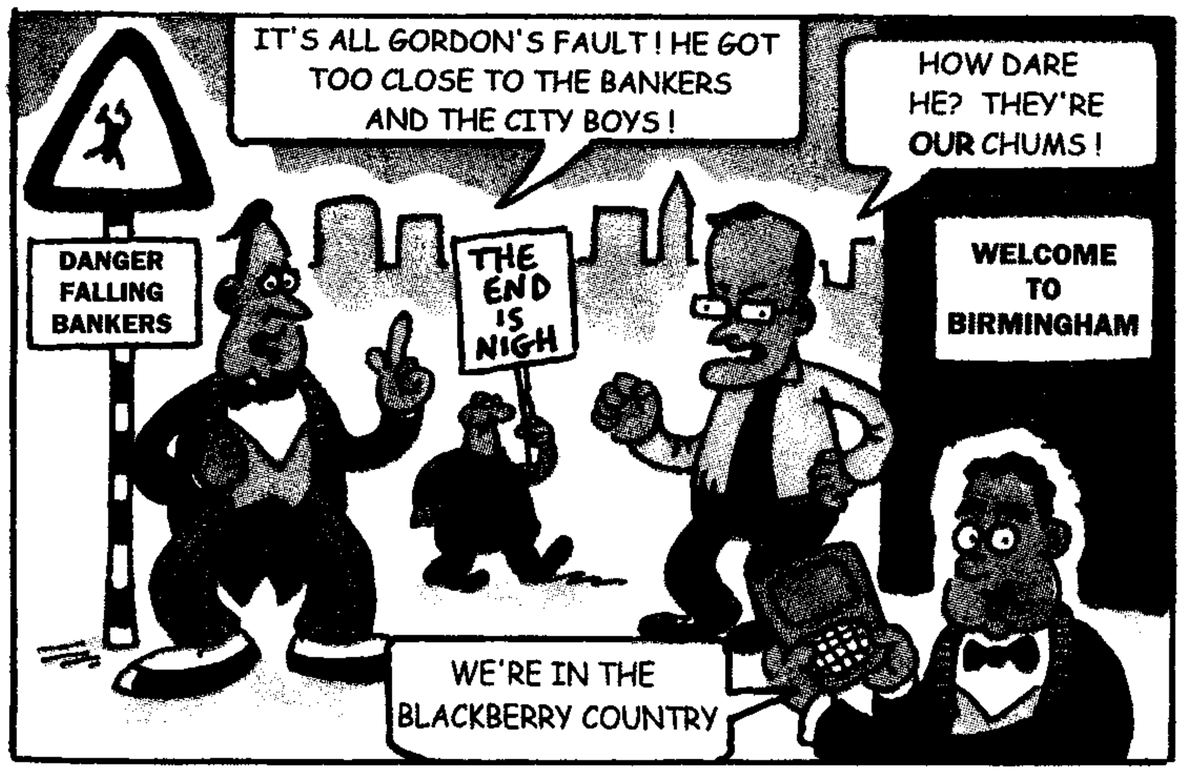
Enemy of the People No. 94 Comrade Ruth Kelly

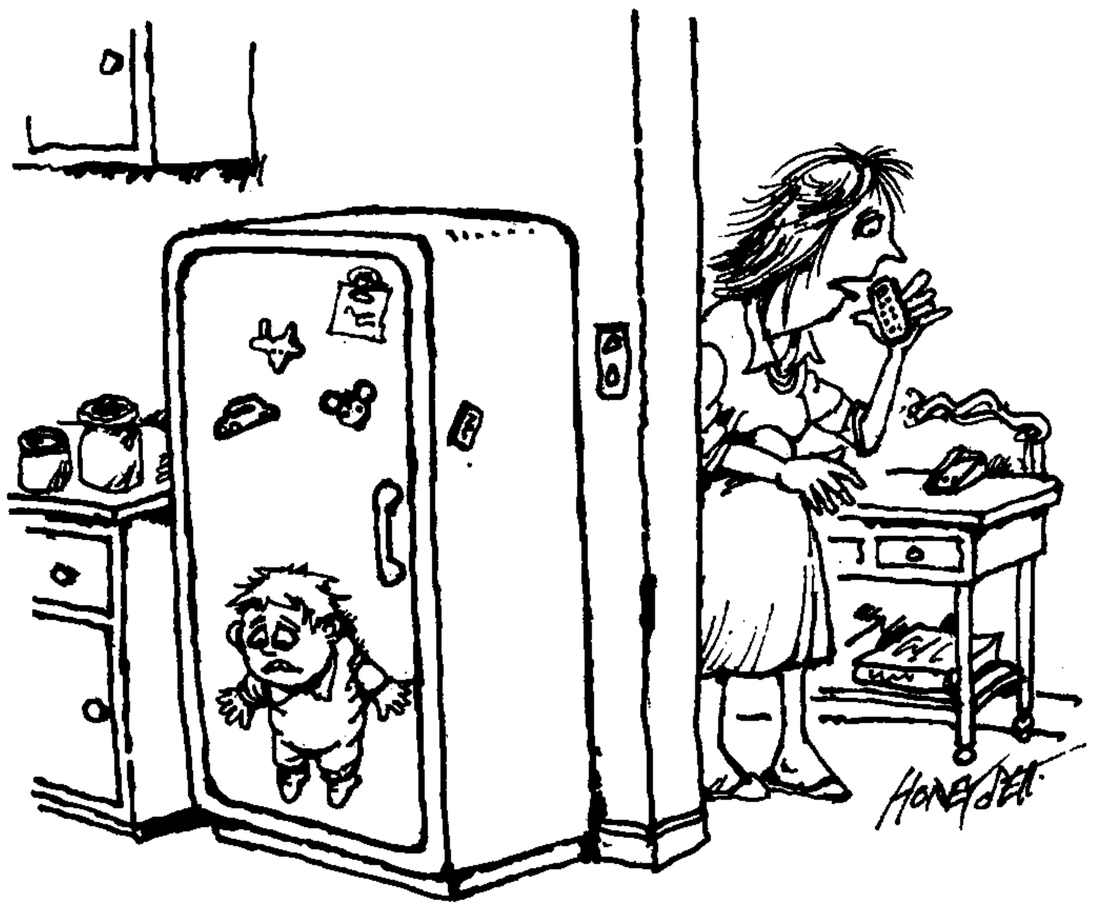
Comrade Kelly has betrayed our great movement by selfishly announcing her resignation in a vain attempt to push the Supreme Leader's triumphant speech off the front pages. How dare this over-promoted lickspittle lackey of the former discredited former leader and member of the secret cult Opus Toni seek to upstage the Supreme Leader's Finest Hour by resigning before she was fired. She will now be banished to the obscurity from which she should never have emerged.

Thoughts Of Chairman Brown

"This is the age of irresponsibility – and I'm not responsible for it."

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS


IT'S ALL GORDON'S FAULT ! HE GOT TOO CLOSE TO THE BANKERS AND THE CITY BOYS !
HOW DARE HE? THEY'RE OUR CHUMS !
DANGER FALLING BANKERS
THE END IS NIGH
WELCOME TO BIRMINGHAM
WE'RE IN THE BLACKBERRY COUNTRY
IT'S TERRIBLE ! SOMEONE'S GOING TO PROFIT FROM ALL THIS MISERY !
YES, US ! HURRAH !
DAVE'S STOCK HAS RISEN - THAT'S A BONUS EH, READERS ?
POLLS
TIME FOR SOME TOFF MEASURES !
SELL SELL OURSELVES !!!
BYE BYE GORDON ! ! !



"I think he's swallowed a fridge magnet"

GLENDA SLAGG

Fleet Street's toxic, sub-prime hackette!

■ **MIRIAM MARGOLYES – aren't-chasickofher?!?!! She's the lumpy dumpy luvvie duvvie who couldn't stop herself confessin' to glamourpuss Kirsty Young on the radio that she gave her mum a fatal stroke by telling her she was gay!?!! OK, so you killed your mum!?!! Who hasn't?!?? Get over it, clear off to your desert island and stay there!!?! No offence, Miriam!?!!**

■ MIRIAM MARGOLYES – don't-chaluvher?!? She's the roly-poly Lesbian National Treasure who's not afraid to tell glamourpuss Kirsty Young all her secrets!?!! OK, so she killed her mum by telling her she was gay?!? Who hasn't?!?? For gawd's sake, don't clear off to that dreary old desert island, dearie – we need you here to keep us all a-gigglin' and a-sniggerin' in the dark days that lie ahead!!?!

■ **HATS OFF to Ant and Dec, our brave boys from Toon Town (that's Birmingham, stoopid!?!), who've gone to cheer up the troops in Afghanistan!?!! They're not content to sit around safely in a TV studio fiddlin' the phone lines!?! No sirree!?! When the trumpet sounds, the cheeky chappies Tank and Jet (Geddit?!) will risk their lives bringing mirth to our heroes on the front line!?! Come on, Your Majesty, give them a VC (that's *Very Courageous*, geddit?)!!?!**

■ SPARE a thought for our gallant lads on the front line in faraway Afghanistan!?! Each day they risk their lives dodgin' the bullets of the terrible Taliban. And, as if things weren't bad enough, they've now got Ant and Dec to hide from!?!! Talk about the Telly Ban (Geddit?)!?!! Come on, Your Majesty, put them in the Tower of London where they belong!?!!

■ **SPARE a thought for poor Mr Nigella (that's Charles Saatchi I'm talkin' about, stoopid!?!). You know why he eats nothing but eggs all day? So he doesn't have to force down the so-called Domestic Goddess's god-awful grub!?! Cream-Fried Chocolate Monkfish with Banana Sorbet, anyone?!??**

■ CHARLES SAATCHI!?! What a plonker!?!! Fancy guzzlin' boiled eggs all day when you could be tuckin' in to Nigella's succulent Cream-Fried Chocolate Monkfish with Banana Sorbet!?!! Mmmmm!?! Yum!! Yum!!?!

■ *HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Credit Crunch Cuties!?!*

● **Hank Paulson.** George Bush's Money Maestro!?! You can bail *me* out and squeeze my credit any time, Mr Hanky-Panky!??! (Geddit?!)

● **Robert Preston.** The BBC's Scoopmeister!?! OK, so he talks in a silly way and you can't understand a word he says!?! It's not *talk* I'm after?!?? Geddit?!?

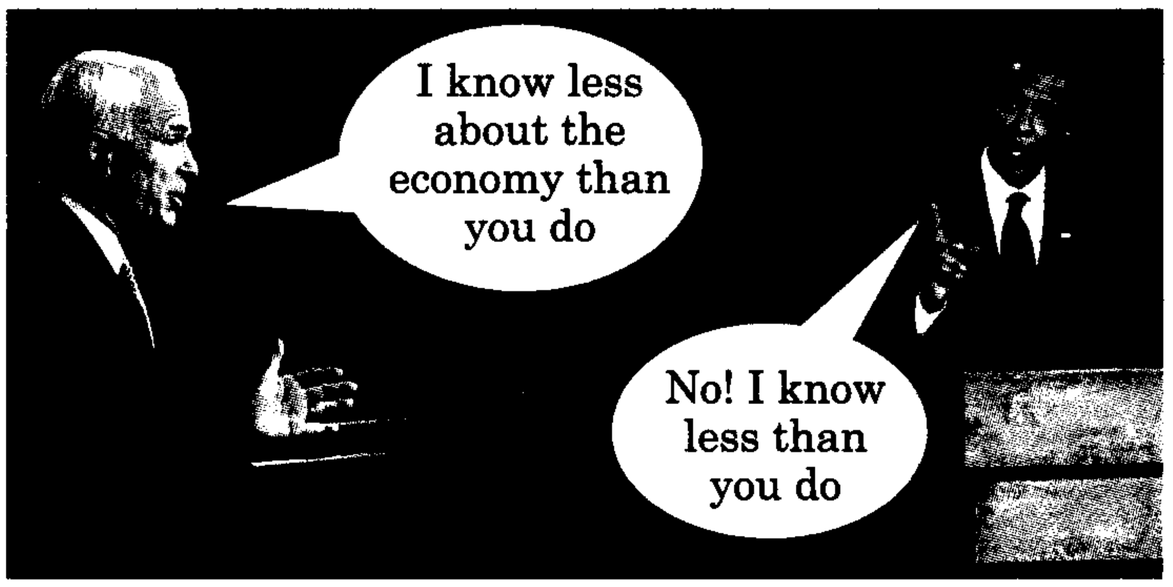
● **Vince Cable.** OK, so he's bald and a Lib Dem!? You can't have everything!?!!

Byeee!!

CRISIS IN PICTURES

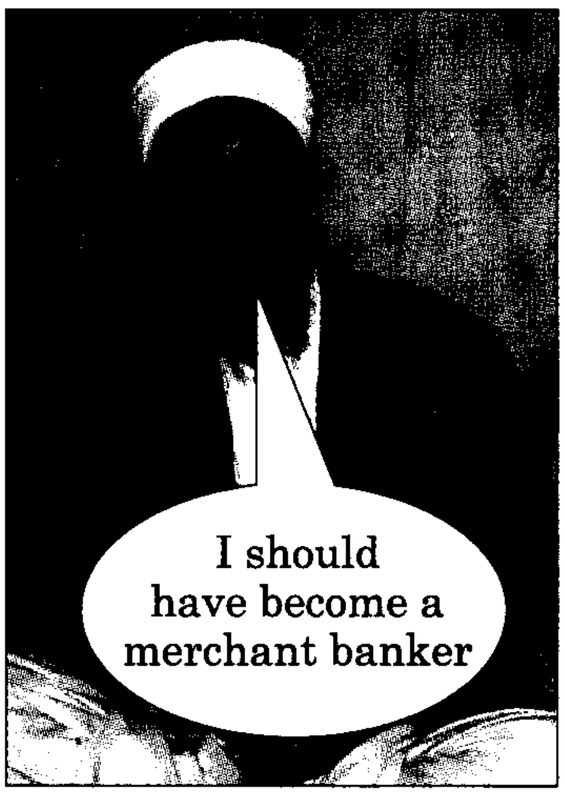
BUSH INVADES WALL STREET

THAT OBAMA/McCAIN DEBATE



BRADFORD & BINGLEY – NEW ADVERTISEMENT

COLLAPSE OF WEST



BROWN NEW STRATEGY

THE SCOTSMAN

Friday, 3 October, 1041

LEADER'S WIFE GIVES HIM LIFELINE

by Will "Lewis" Shakespeare

Beleaguered premier Gordon Macbeth was today given a huge boost when his wife Lady Macbeth publicly endorsed him as King.

"I know the real Macbeth," she told delegates, wearing an elegant two-piece grey blood-flecked outfit with matching killer heels.

"He is a warm and sensitive human being and he hardly killed Tony

Banquo at all.

"These are dark ages," she continued, "and you need an experienced leader who knows how to get people done."

Spot of Bother

Seasoned commentators were quick to praise Lady Macbeth's intervention.

"This should be an end to all the hubble, bubble, toil and trouble," said one witch, "unless of course Birnam Wood North falls to the Tories and the novice Macduff goes Green, dresses up as a tree and

(cont. Folio 94)

ON OTHER PAGES ✣ Your Thanes Tonight 2 ✣ New clampdown on dagger crime 3 ✣ Weather Watch: New Blood Warning 5 ✣ Unfunny Cartoon by Mac 94

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Paul Newman, Salad Dressing Entrepreneur

So. Farewell
Then Paul Newman –
Probably the greatest
Salad dressing
Creator of
The 20th century.

Newman's Own.

Yes, that's what
We looked for
In Waitrose.

But you were
Not just famous
For your
Salad dressing.

Oh no.

You will also
Be remembered
For your
Bolognese sauce.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

Advertisement

Don't mention the free wine (or the murder)

Felix Dennis will be reading his poetry at a venue near you. You are cordially invited to come along and listen to some of the finest verse ever composed, viz –

"I wandered lonely along a cliff
And with this bloke I had a tiff
I pushed him off, I done him in,
But don't you mention it or you'll
be referred to my lawyers"

© World copyright Felix Dennis

"For God's sake, Barry, stop being so contrary and join in"

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Five-year-olds can't spell their own names

No suprise there then, the teacher's ca'nt even spell names! My daughter Cristal has three friend's, D'estineé, Méygen, Kassidee. Teachers spelling? Crystal, Destiny, Megan, Cassidy. Unbelevable – ***Yummy_Mummy8***

30 million counterfeit pound coins in circulation

hold a pound sideway's an if the queens head turn's into a swasticker then its one of the one's they make for the nazi genrels that r still alive, my mate work's at the mint so he know's – ***Laters***

just check-d my pocket's – 3 pound's ALL FAKE with FOREIN word's on them DECUS ET TUTAMEN ● WTF?!!! ● ● ● bottler brown pleas explain!!! – ***Broken_Britan***

Mine have a foreign language on them too, Broken. They say "ONE POUND"! ◡̈ – ***Cymreig_Rhyfelwr***

I've had six Swazi lilangenis this week. They use the same planchets as for pounds, so they are the same size and shape. If Brown stays they'll be worth sixty quid soon. I picked him up once when he was just an ordinary MP. He was a right plum and he made the cab smell of fish. – ***Chris_the_cabbie***

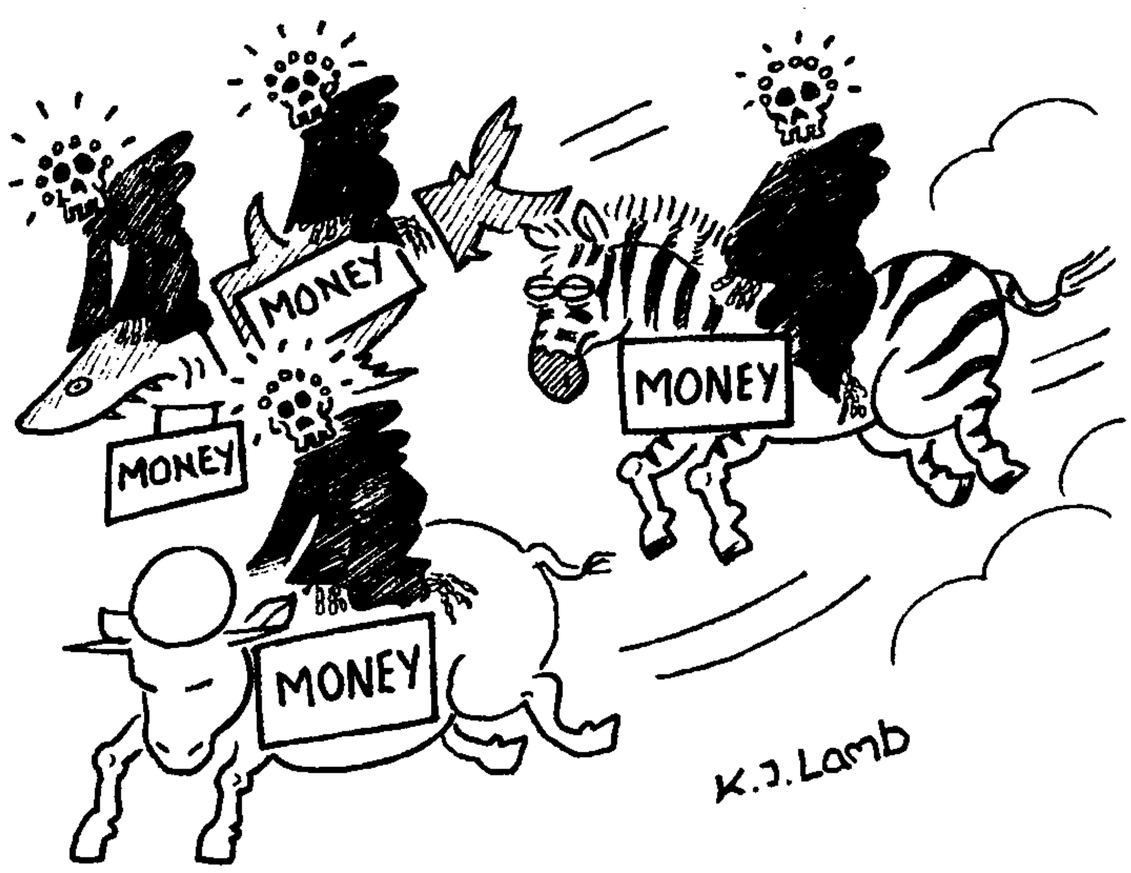
pound sterl-ing = pound steal-ing, out with the thieving bottler, the mans a total reliability – ***Matty_the_hammer***

Charts to reflect number of plays

Splendid news! For too long the charts have been devalued, with the latest "boy band" or "old boy" (apologies Sir Cliff!) getting to number one by selling a couple of dozen copies. Now, by monitoring Napster et al, the charts will begin to reflect the true popularity of recording artists. As a consequence, I have written to all the major digital providers, requesting that my favourite disc be made available. I refer, of course, to Lord Birkett's 1962 long-player "The Art of Advocacy", which, aside from the title track, also features the marvellous "Cricketers Everywhere" and "Shakespeare Birthday Luncheon". Unquestionably a live album to compare with those of the MC5, James Brown, and Dylan's so-called "Albert Hall" bootleg. (It was actually recorded in Manchester – I know, because I was sitting behind the idiot who shouted "Judas!" and you can clearly hear me say, "Be quiet please, we have come to hear Mr Dylan, not you.") – ***Edwin***

edwin, u r amazin bruv i like da stuff u sent an id like 2 here burkits tunes – ***Zaks_bak***

Another New Labour stunt – listen to the people, blah, blah. Bottler's been massaging the chart figures for years – ***Brown_out***



The Four Hirstmen Of The Apocalypse

UK TO BE SOLD TO FRENCH

'A good deal for Britain' says Brown

by Our Electricity Staff **Conrad Black-Out**

THE United Kingdom is to be sold to a French company EBF (Everything Belongs to France) which is wholly owned by the French Government for the sum of £12.52.

Grid is Good

After long negotiations the Managing Director of EBF, Monsieur Mangetout, emerged to tell reporters "From now on the future of Britain is secure and we can guarantee that it will be very much better run than it has been in recent years by a succession of Tory and Labour governments."

He concluded, "All British Power will now be transferred to France."

HOW THAT DEAL STACKS UP

What the French Get

- **The remains of British Industry**

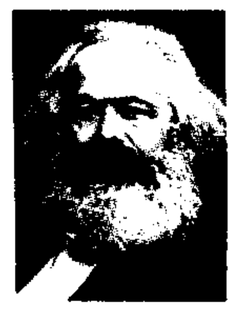
What the British Get

- **£12.52**
- **Very expensive energy**

The Large Hardon Collider, which was launched in Switzerland on 10 September, could unravel the secrets of the universe

Photo caption, Independent

'ARCHBISHOP WAS RIGHT' Claims Marx



by Our Religious Affairs Staff **St Francis of Wheen**

ONE MAN with a beard yesterday rushed to the support of another man with a beard in attacking the greed and folly of world capitalism.

Said Karl Marx, 183, speaking from Highgate Cemetery, "I have read the Archbishop of Canterbury's critique of the present international financial crisis – and whilst I don't go along with all that religious stuff, believing as I do that it is similar to a Class A drug – the Archbishop is spot on when he says that these bankers should be strung up. It's the only language they understand."

RELIGIOUS LEADER CRITICISED

by Our Money-lending Correspondent **Phil Church**

BUSINESS leaders have described as "highly inappropriate and naïve" comments made by Jesus yesterday.

"For Jesus to demand that the money lenders get out of his father's temple shows a disturbing lack of understanding of how important the City is," said a leading Pharisee. "Hundreds of thousands of jobs rely on these traders in the City and the wealth they create.

"Jesus would be well advised to check his facts properly, before he starts making such sweeping generalisations in the future.

"I would say his silly outburst rules out his suitability for any form of high office."

Jesus is 2008.

NEW BOOKS

Harry Potter and the Order of the Garter

by J.K. Rowlinginit

TROUBLE starts when Harry Potter gives £1 million to Bumblebore, the leader of the Not Very Wizard Party, and is made Lord Voldemort in the New Year's Honours List *(That's enough. Ed.)*

MODERN INN SIGNS

Those B.A. Chargeable Extras In Full

1) Seats.
2) Wings.
3) Landing gear.
4) Er...
5) That's it.

the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOD
THE 'RESPECT' CAMPAIGN SEEMS TO BE GOING OK
YEH PLAYERS ARE NO LONGER HOUNDING AND ABUSING THE REFEREES...
SHAME WE CAN'T SAY THE SAME ABOUT THE MANAGERS!
IT'S A PENALTY YOU BLIND TWAT!
CALM DOWN
HE DIVED, FUCKIN' BOOK HIM!

That All-Purpose Financial Article In Full

WORLD stock markets today staged a **massive rally/nose-dived spectacularly** as a **massive injection of Government money into a failing bank/fears that a failing bank could have to be propped up with Government money** signalled what most observers agreed was the **beginning of the end of the credit crunch/the beginning of the real credit crunch** meaning that we can now look forward to the **complete recovery of the global economy/the end of the world as we know it.**

Mayor **Boris Johnson** writes exclusively for the *Daily Beanograph*

Don't Let's Be Beastly To The Bankers

CRIPES! What's got into everyone all of a sudden having a go at those fellows in the City! Blimey! They're only doing their job – at least the chaps who have still got one!

After all, Britain wouldn't be where it was today if it wasn't for all those bods in suits toiling away with their Blackberries night and day on our behalf! And yet to read some of the lefty brigade sounding off you'd think that these bank johnnies had brought the whole bally economy crashing down on purpose!

Look, I know a lot of bankers, many of them were at school or the Varsity with me, and I have dinner with them most nights. And believe me, you couldn't wish to meet a nicer more decent set of coves anywhere between here and the Equator!

And as for their wives! Phwoarrr! Talk about high-class totty! No wonder old Boris is the first to offer *them* a helping hand in the kitchen while hubby is opening the champers or doing a deal on his mobile!

So I say lay off the bankers of Britain. And the bonkers! Whoops! Time for Boris to potter off down to City Hall to do a spot of running London!

© Barclaytrash 2008.

POLLY FILLER on the credit crunch

LIKE every working mum performing the high-wire juggling act of career and motherhood, I've been experiencing the chill winds of financial meltdown. We're all feeling the pinch, aren't we? And the credit crunch is putting the broke in Lad-broke Grove!

Simon and I had an emergency crisis meeting in our local Starbucks (we called it a Credit Brunch!) and drew up a list of what were essentials in our life and what we could cut back. So here it is:

Toddler Charlie's School Fees: St Duncetan's Academy For Differently Gifted Children. Worth every penny to keep a hyperactive five-year-old busy whilst mum slaves away at the coalface, writing columns about cutbacks!

SkyPlusPlus: The Useless Simon says he can't live without his daily fix of James May's Extreme Pipe-smoking on More Dave Gold Extra (with special guests Richard Hammond and Jeremy Clarkson).

Handbags, shoes, etc: Don't even go there.

Ocado Delivery: Ditto.

All other items: Double ditto.

Holidays: P-l-e-a-s-e!

SO WE had to face the grim reality. There was only one area of our lives where we could realistically economise. And it would hurt.

Yes, the au-pair would have to take a pay cut. It's hard, but I think Dürtcziip (our new useless girl from Georgia) understood. As I explained to her, "There's no point in you sending money home to your village because it no longer exists."

Polly Filler's amusing new book Life Begins At Thrifty *(Johnson and Pearson) is now available at all good bookstores, price £39.99.*

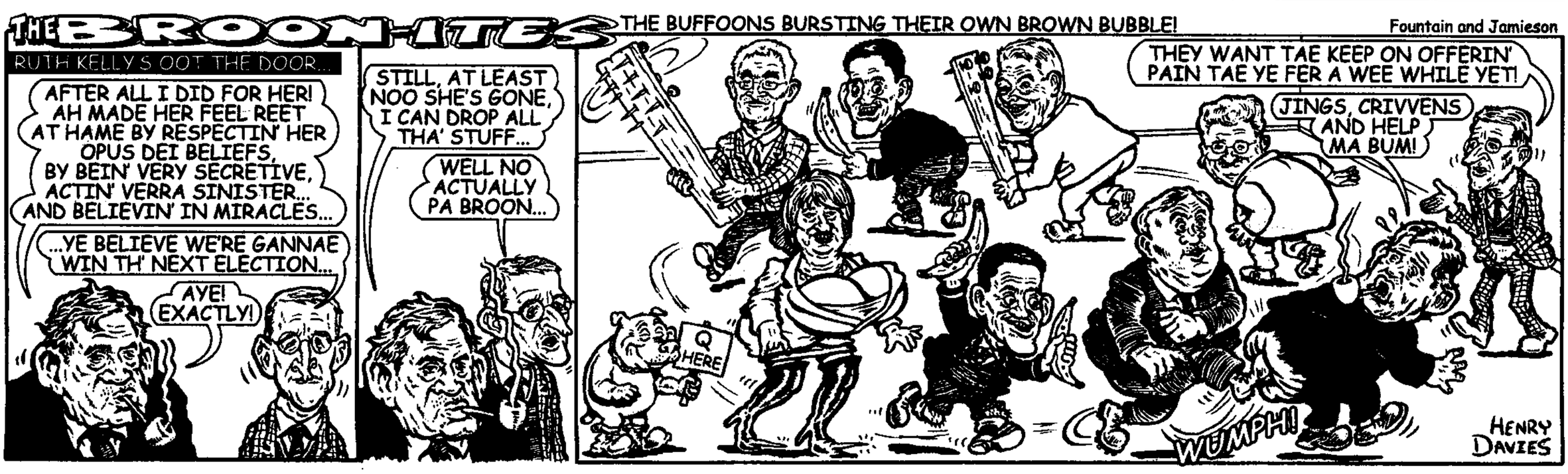
'Big Bang' Mystery Explained

by Our Scientific Staff **L. Hadron Hubbard**, Chief Thetan to the Cern Project

THE mystery of how the large Hadron Collider broke down only a 200 millionth of a second after it began has been solved according to scientists.

"We now believe that there was what we call a Big Bang and then all the lights went out,' said the projects director, Dr Strabismus of Utrecht.

"We eventually tracked down the cause of the problem and discovered a black hole in the fuse box," he continued. "Apparently, electricians are very hard to find in Switzerland, but we are hoping to get the whole thing going again before the world ends."


THE BROON-ITES
THE BUFFOONS BURSTING THEIR OWN BROWN BUBBLE!
Fountain and Jamieson
RUTH KELLY'S OOT THE DOOR...
AFTER ALL I DID FOR HER! AH MADE HER FEEL REET AT HAME BY RESPECTIN' HER OPUS DEI BELIEFS, BY BEIN' VERY SECRETIVE, ACTIN' VERRA SINISTER... AND BELIEVIN' IN MIRACLES...
...YE BELIEVE WE'RE GANNAE WIN TH' NEXT ELECTION...
AYE! EXACTLY!
STILL, AT LEAST NOO SHE'S GONE, I CAN DROP ALL THA' STUFF...
WELL NO ACTUALLY PA BROON...
THEY WANT TAE KEEP ON OFFERIN' PAIN TAE YE FER A WEE WHILE YET!
JINGS, CRIVVENS AND HELP MA BUM!
Q HERE
WUMPH!
HENRY DAVIES

BLAIRITE STAR QUITS SHOCK

by Our Political Staff **Nighttime O'Booze**

ONE OF the most glittering careers in recent British Politics came to a sudden and abrupt end when at 3.03 this morning a tearful Ruth Kelly issued a statement announcing her resignation as Secretary of State for Paperclips.

So ends the dazzling rise of the young Blairite superstar, still only 40, whom many had tipped to be a future Prime Minister.

Her meteoric career speaks for itself:

1998 Elected MP for Wapshott North. Immediately appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary to Ted Cribbins when he was Junior Minister for Photocopying.

2001 Rocketed to her first fully-fledged ministerial post as Tony Blair's "Stapler Czar", in charge of the government's stationery policy.

2004 First Cabinet post as Secretary of State for Paedophilia. After a stormy three months, moved sideways to head the new Ministry of Communities, Skills and Lifelong Sandwiches.

2007 Made the front pages when she had a stunning makeover, turning her from short-haired, frumpy brunette into flowing-locked, blonde bombshell whose presence on the front bench sent her male colleagues' temperatures soaring.

But now Ruth's fairy story has come to a bitter end. Like a female

Kelly: Incredible make-over

Icarus, she has plunged from the heights after flying too high and too close to Tony Blair.

ON OTHER PAGES

DID SHE JUMP OR WAS SHE PUSHED?

Who gives a toss?

Mr David Miliband

An Apology

IN RECENT weeks we may have given the impression that we considered the Foreign Secretary, Mr David Miliband, as the only possible successor to Gordon Brown as leader of the Labour Party and Britain's Prime Minister. We may have inadvertently portrayed Mr Miliband as an extraordinarily gifted politician possessed of a first-rate intellect and gifted with immense charisma. Headlines such as "Step Down Now Gordy And Make Way For Dazzling Dave!" may have led our readers to believe that we in some way entertained a high opinion of Mr Miliband's talents and prospects.

In the light of a photograph of Mr Miliband holding a banana and wearing an inane grin following a conference speech of unparalleled vacuity, we now realise that there was not a jot or scintilla of truth in any of the above.

We further accept that Mr Miliband is a pathetic nincompoop and a prating nitwit and the idea that he should be Prime Minister is as ludicrous as it would be to hand over the premiership to Mr Bean.

We apologise unreservedly to Mr Miliband and have agreed never to refer to him again in any context whatsoever.

© All Newspapers.

THAT RESHUFFLE IN FULL

- ***Out goes*** ... Gordon Brown
- ***In comes*** ... Gordon Brown
- ***Er***... That's it.

Those Austrian Election Results Latest

Vienna South

Mr A. Hitler *(Keep Austria Austrian)* 25,374;

Mr M. Mosley *(Conservative Discipline Party)* 24,722;

Admiral Von Trapp *(Sound of Music Party)* 3.

Neo-Fascist Gain.

SPOT THE BALLS

The Schools Secretary is keeping it tight at the front! Can you spot the balls?

Simply put an X next to David Cameron's name in the general election and you'll be a winner!

Send now to "Spot The Bollocks Competition"

(That's enough. We get the idea. Ed.)

Advertisement

New from Gnome

Once in a lifetime offer to collectors

100% GENUINE FAKE ONE POUND COIN

THIS limited edition of 30 million coins, specially faked for the House of Gnome by highly untrained Romanian master forgers, is now being made available to the public at a bargain price.

For only £1.50, you can acquire a piece of history that will be treasured by you and your loved ones for generations to come.

WARNING: These coins can not be used as legal tender and may contain traces of nuts

BRIDESHEAD REVISITED

Remake of the Evelyn Waugh classic telling the story of gauche, middle-class undergraduate Michael Gove who goes up to Oxford and is seduced into a glittering world of young Conservatives.

Tragedy strikes when young Gove is lured into a five-in-a-bed sex romp with a group of teddy bears. The student newspaper *Cherwell* finds out and only 20 years later the scandal resurfaces in the *Mail on Sunday*, bringing a sudden end to Gove's meteoric rise to shadow spokesman for handmade crisps. Don't miss the cameo of David Cameron as Bullingdon Bertie, the beautiful toff with the heart of gold.

Cast in Full

Michael Gove	**Harry Potter**
David Cameron	**Sebastian Flyte**
George Osborne	**Benedict Cumberpatch**
Boris Johnson	**Johnny Vegas**
Aloysius, the Teddy Bear	**Sir John Betjeman**

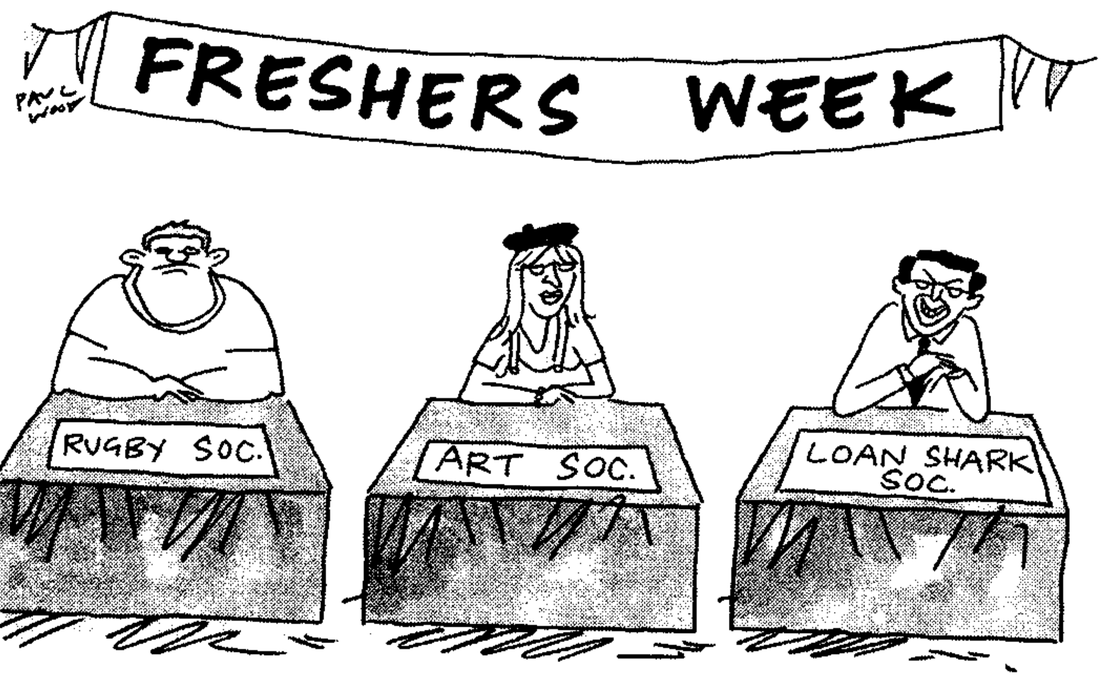
A Taxi Driver writes

EVERY week a well-known cabbie writes on an issue of burning importance.

This week, **Dave Sleet** (Cab No. 999).

Blimey, guv. Did you see about all them cabs bursting into flames? All by themselves? What do they call it – spontaneous combustion? I don't believe it myself. How can a cab suddenly burst into flmes? Don't make any sense. Tell you what, is it a bit warm in here or is it just me? That's funny, I can smell smoke – you're not smoking are you guv, it's not allowed no more, we got a sign up there, look – "No Smoking" – hang on, it's coming from under where I'm sitting! Fuck me, the cab's on fire!

NEXT WEEK: No cabs will be available due to unforeseen circumstances.



That Controversial Paul McCartney Israeli Playlist In Full

- **Hey Judas Macabeus** ♪
- **Avocado Fields Forever**
- **We Can't Work It Out** ♫
- **Don't Let It Be**
- **Shekel Lane** ♪
- **Give War A Chance**
- **Die and Let Die**
- **The Long and Winding Wall** ♫
- **I Want To Hold Your Land**

(That's enough hits. Ed)

New From K-Tel Aviv Records

BBC Radio 3

Opera Tonight

Berlusconi's *'The Non-Flying Duceman'*

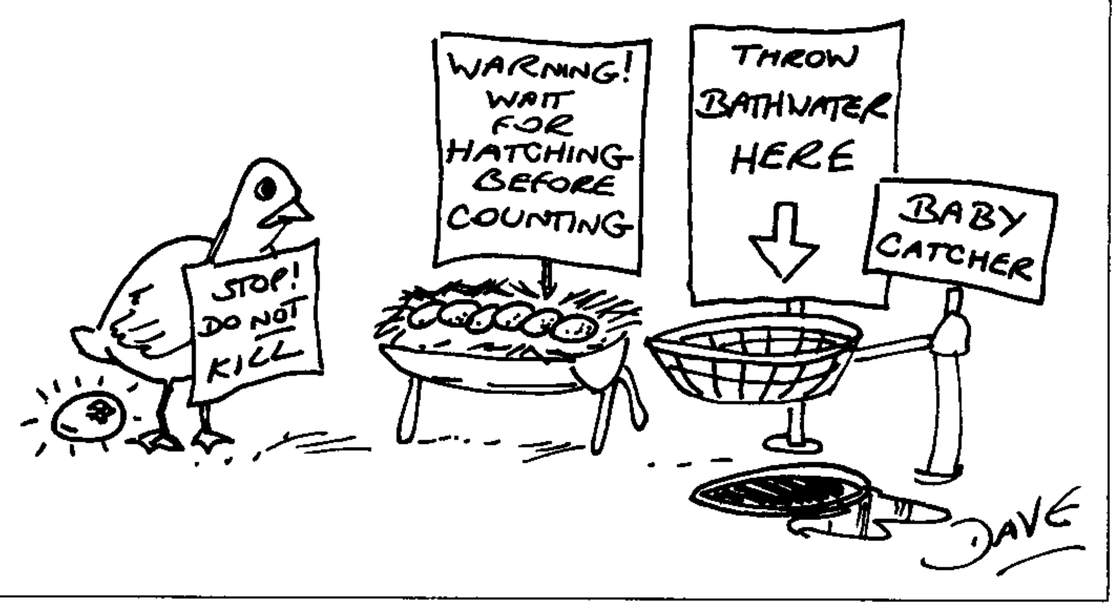
The Robber Baron, Silvio, sets out to save his nation's greatest treasure, the Italian airline, and a group of bankers, seeing the chance of making a large profit all sing *"The Alitalia Chorus"*.

However, the Robber Baron discovers that the airline is worthless and the country has no money.

As a result the planes are all grounded and the passengers are forced to fly Ryan Air instead.

The opera ends with one passenger singing the plaintive lament *"La Donna e Mobile"* (Hi Donna I'm on the plane, they let you use your phone now).

Nanny State update



Daily Mail, Friday, October 3, 2008

Is This The Most Violent Society On Earth?

Asks Max Hastings

ONCE again the world has reeled in horror as another gruesome mass shooting has occurred in – yes – Finland.

What is wrong with this tiny, snowbound state *(subs: check size and temperature)* where gun-crazed students constantly run amok across campuses, killing hundreds of innocent young people on a daily basis?

Snow Idea

How can the land of reindeer stew, Nokia telephones and the music of Sibelius have spawned so many raging psychopaths?

I have no idea, but the editor of this newspaper has just rung me up and offered me £5,000 to knock out 1,000 words by 5pm.

That is why I say – it is time for Finland to adopt sensible gun laws, banning their deadly hunting rifles before the drink-crazed Fins emerge from the forest on their snow shoes to ski down the mountains and slaughter us all in our beds.

Sibelius – Lethal?

© *Hitlertrash 2008.*

DIARY

BERNARD DONOUGHUE'S DOWNING STREET DIARY

2 January 1979: Life is full of inconveniences. On my way to lunch with George Weidenfeld, I am obliged to step over a dead body. Make mental note: corpses send out the wrong sort of messages to those having lunch. Must advise Jim Callaghan to get army to remove all corpses from area around Savoy Grill – area round Clerkenwell far more suitable, with fewer restaurants, or at any rate none worth going to.

Over vintage port, George urges me to write "all sorts of books", possibly one on poverty and how to cure it through voluntary self-restraint. I asked if I could expect £30000 and he said, "Minimum" but I would probably need more. Meeting poor people in their own environment would require considerable travel and hotel expenses, etc.

6 January 1979: Jim Callaghan immensely impressive putting down Thatcher in Prime Minister's Questions, completely exposing her inexperience and lack of humour. I say she has all the hallmarks of a loser – unlikely to survive the next General Election. We discuss who the Tories will pick as their next leader, post-defeat. We agree it should be Maudling, the only Tory who really understands the mood of the country. Lovely dinner at Maxim's with Fred Peart, who kindly informs me I'm a shoo-in for the next Vice-Chancellor of London University.

Why hasn't Fred been honoured? Must remember to pull necessary levers.

12 January 1979: Lunch at The Garrick with Robin Day, who picked up the bill. On way back, I decide to feed his name into the honours machine. After all, he's done as much as anyone to promote the cause of democratic debate over a decent bottle of claret. And we should also urgently think about raising Fred Peart and Eric Varley, Jack Jones and Roy Mason to the peerage. They've done more than most to help bring equality to this class-divided country, and richly deserve to be elevated for it. Lovely dinner at Le Gavroche to talk about the current crisis with Roy Jenkins, who kindly suggests I should be the next First Sea Lord.

15 January 1979. The name of Reginald Kray is being mentioned as a safe pair of hands for the Home Office. "We could do with someone of his experience," says Roy.

17 January 1979: News of PM's proposed state of emergency v. depressing. In the morning, I begin to prepare an advisory paper setting out a far-reaching plan for the future well-being of the UK but suddenly it's mid-day and time for lunch, so I scribble "WHY NOT SELL OFF NORTH SEA OIL?" in big letters and hand it to the PM, making it to The Gay Hussar just in time for lovely chilled wild cherry soup followed by veal goulash with lovely Shirley Williams.

Shirley is desperately concerned about child poverty up North. I say how desperately concerned I am about it as well, and tell her that I think Jim is probably desperately concerned too. Tell her the best way to tackle it is to re-definine it, thus bringing 95% of all people into category of "better off". It's really the very least we can do to give them a leg-up. Pudding a lovely walnut cheese pancake with extra cream. Shirley suggests I might like to take over the Chairmanship of British Leyland. Back to No. 10 just in time to hear news of economic collapse, then off to Covent Garden for lovely Tosca.

22 February 1979: PM very buoyant. "The funny thing is that we are going to win the election by over 100 seats" he says. He adds that "ordinary people have no time for Mrs Thatcher. She just doesn't understand them like we do. The last thing they want is to own their own homes, they much prefer them to be owned by us." He tells Cabinet that once the North Sea Oil revenue starts coming in, we'll be able to bury all those dead bodies everyone's going on about.

Denis Healey pipes up that the corpses have only got themselves to blame. "Bloody layabouts" he says.

Tony Benn puts forward a major new plan he has drawn up to allow corpses to form a union of their own – "Something along the lines of The Union of the Recently Departed and Technically Deceased, or RDTD for short," he says. Cabinet agree that if we allowed them to feel a vital part of the wider Labour movement then when it came to making a fuss they wouldn't have a leg to stand on.

The lovely Shirley Williams suggests that if the corpses are going to remain unburied, then it might be nice to decorate them, or wrap them in bright colours, so that ordinary, decent passers-by could be feel better about themselves. The PM points out that Peter Jay thinks that corpses are good as a hedge against inflation "and let's face it, Peter's dreadfully clever, they tell me he knows all about money."

Lovely dinner at Mon Plaisir with Harold Lever who advises me to invest in the development of technology to turn unburied corpses into fuel. Finish with a lovely crème brûlée over which he kindly suggests that I might care to be the next but one Governor of the Bank of England ("It would be very you, Bernard") and taxi home by midnight.

April 14 1979: Polls are predicting a slim majority for Labour, so Jim looks worried, but I tell him not to fuss, it'll be a push-over. It does the trick, and he soon relaxes. He offers me a whisky, by way of celebration. "Thatcher has badly misjudged the situation" I advise. Jim agrees. "You've hit the nail on the head, Bernard. The British people don't like a bossy woman. They much prefer a chap like me, who doesn't make a song-and-dance about it when things go from bad to worse." Jim says that once he's back in No. 10, he hopes I'll give some consideration to becoming our next President of the Board of Trade, which is lovely, and further proof of how people under-rate him at their peril.

"And we need a safe pair of hands to steer M15 through tricky waters," he says. "So I'm toying with asking Sir Anthony Blunt to take up the reins if Jeremy (Thorpe) turns it down."

4 May 1979: Labour has lost the General Election. At No. 10, Jim says Thatcher would have done a whole lot better if she had understood the mood of the British people "but she's completely out of touch". He suggests it might amuse me to take over the National Theatre or British Rail, or possibly both. Dinner at The Ritz with lovely Willie Whitelaw, who points out that the new lot will be needing people like me on board, just to help guide them through.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

YOU KNOW, JOHNSON, IT'S A FUNNY THING BEING FAMOUS IN THIS DAY AND AGE...
GREEN ROOM
INDEED, SIR.
YOU CAN GET TREATED LIKE ROYALTY WHEREVER YOU GO BUT IT'S OFTEN JUST A FRAGILE FACADE...
I PERSONALLY FIND MYSELF FEELING INCREASINGLY UNCOMFORTABLE IN THE WORLD OF VIP CELEBRITY TODAY...
SHALL I ASK THEM FOR ANOTHER CUSHION, SIR.
YES PLEASE. THIS SEAT'S KILLING ME.

Literary Review

Through the motions

Ways of Life: On Places, Painters, Poets
Andrew Motion
(Faber, £18.99)

WHY is it, gentle reader, that this modest assembly of the poet laureate's old book reviews and gallery saunters should stir such irritation?

Could it be the author's inability to calibrate his sub-title (*Selected Essays and Reviews 1994–2008*) with the actual contents of the book, which goes at least as far back as a piece written for the *TLS* in 1982? Or is it the la-di-da three-page foreword, in which Motion chunters on about the nature of the form, laments the absence of the 1,800 or so pages that didn't make the final cut, and produces some absolutely deathless *obiter dicta* about the way he spends his mornings (sample: "Reviewing is a way of life as well as a way of giving life, and in both respects it requires self-assertion as well as self-surrender")?

Or could it simply be the tone in which this 270 pages-worth of Bonnard and Betjeman, Hardy and Howard Hodgkin brings off – or fails to bring off – its effects? The late Auberon Waugh once remarked that a book reviewer should be judged on the liveliness of his or her response. *Ways of Life*, alternatively, belongs to a school of literary journalism that has been going strong for upwards of a century and a half, what might be called the genteel-refined. There are, to be sure, one or two red herrings – Mr Motion is hot on the informal truncation ("It's", "I've", etc), and there are occasional diggings in the pop-cultural sandpit (one piece on Dylan's first electric tour, another on His Bobness's paintings) – but most of the stuff about Keats, Wordsworth, Shelley and co. wouldn't look out of place in the *Athenaeum* circa 1880.

Do I exaggerate? Motion favours critical suavities like "important" and "moving" and "exceptionally". He can describe a work like Jonathan Bate's biography of Clare as "appropriately ample and judicious". He can talk, straight-faced, about the "plangent beauty" of Christina Rossetti. His weakness for seemly cliché has him packing the Rossetti piece with all manner of bromides about "the plight of mid-nineteenth-century middle-class women as they swirl down the marriage-stream to a lonely old age", life-long spinsters and desperate remedies. And then – the exceptions that prove the rule – come those terrible moments when the cautious patter is suddenly thrust aside in favour of the flourish. "A thrush sings, its voice like loose change flung onto the ground" he announces at the start of a travelogue re-acting Keats's voyage to Italy. "Blackwater – black as its name" opens a piece about the family home, "but also peat-brown, hazel, silver, white, pewter and cobalt".

All reviewers have their tics, of course. Motion's include an unhealthy interest in the "what if?" school of criticism. *The Invention of Dr Cake*, his slim novella from 2003, had Keats re-emerging as a doctor. Here we have a sprightly account of Edward Thomas's career after he miraculously survived the Great War. But what really disables these excursions, whether literal, poetic or artistic, is the lack of almost anything in the way of an original viewpoint.

"How you deal with Turner," he wonders, "whose images of Venice are so intensely sympathetic to the place that they have come to seem integral to it? His melting domes and spires, his floating bridges, his low views and long shuddering reflections: all these feel definitive in their lack of definition." The answer, perhaps, is that you don't write sentences like this about him.

Finally, of course, there is the trademarked glad-handedness, that ever-debilitating senior reviewer's tendency to be nice. Frances Wilson's *The Courtesan's Story* "has shown her to be an exceptionally shrewd analyst of erotic complexities". Nicholas Roe is "an exceptionally shrewd critic of Romanticism".

In this context, Motion's sharp disparagement of Peter Ackroyd's *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* in last month's *Guardian* was, to use a form of words our man might favour himself, exceptionally unusual – as if he'd forgotten that he was a public monument for once and suddenly decided to let the other chap really have it. Not all of *Ways of Life* is quite so incorrigibly sedate as this – there's a particularly good piece in which he accompanies his war-veteran father to Normandy for the 60th anniversary of D-Day. But for a demonstration of the effect of company manners on book reviewing, one need look no further.

Thomas Hardy

Books & Bookmen

■ REVIEWING *Ever, Dirk*, a collection of letters by the late Dirk Bogarde, Lynn Barber was distinctly unenthusiastic in the *Daily Telegraph*.

Bogarde's letters were "claustrophobic and self-absorbed" and "not that amusing", she judged, and they revealed that "his interest in the wider world is zilch". Barber then finished with a flourish: "It is time to say *basta* to Bogarde. He has generated more words than he is worth."

Why such vehemence? Though Barber cited various letters in her review, oddly she did not mention the one in which she herself featured. For on page 465, in a letter to John Osborne in May 1994, the actor-writer turns to the subject of hacks and comments: "There are one or two Worthy Ones. Not the cruddy Lynn Barbers and Julie Burchills… sneering and fearful and LOCAL! God, so local! [.....] Barber writes about squirrels and lamp shades (for some reason) […]. Enough. Basta."

Sneering, fearful and local? Our Lynn? Surely not!

■ LITTLE, Brown's blurb for *Life on Mars* actor Philip Glenister's nostalgia cash-in, *Things Ain't What They Used to Be*, taps straight into the concerns of those who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, asking: "Have Curly-Wurlys really got smaller, or have we all just got bigger?"

An important philosophical question, and very similar to one that Little, Brown asked when it published Nicey and Wifey's *Nice Cup of Tea and a Sit Down* in 2004, namely "Have Wagon Wheels really got smaller since your childhood, or have you just got bigger?"

Is Little, Brown guilty of instant nostalgia and laziness, or is it being responsible by recycling?

■ STEPHEN FRY is fast becoming the new Fay Weldon, seemingly always ready to supply the perfect jacket puff.

Hard on the heels of a press release in which he enthused about Alastair Campbell's forthcoming debut novel ("It probably sounds rude to say how surprised I am by the quality… it is the devastating penetration of the human mind that takes this novel out of the ordinary") came a quote for tycoon-poetaster Felix Dennis's latest collection ("The real thing – I love reading his verse and you will too"), which was similarly greeted with widespread disbelief.

It would be wrong to think of Fry as undiscriminating, however – both unlikely puffees are his Random House stablemates, and Campbell is, like Fry, a Hutchinson author.

■ IN THE summer of 2007, Patricia Nicol, deputy editor of the *Sunday Times*'s Culture section, signed a deal for a book on what those who lived through the war and austerity can teach us about thrift, diet and being green.

A smart idea, and something close to it also occurred to her super-wealthy *Sunday Times* colleague India Knight, as Knight's improbable forthcoming offering, *The Thrift Book*, similarly features growing food, cooking, clothes-making, mending, saving, shunning shops where possible (a *volte face* for the author of a guide for shopaholics) and generally making do.

Without office duties, and

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
YOU'RE JOLLY BRAVE PUBLISHING THIS BOOK ABOUT MOHAMMED, MR RYNJA
GIBSON SQUARE PUBLISHERS
THE JEWEL OF MEDWA
I REFUSE TO BE INTIMIDATED

without the research-requiring 1940s angle, the columnist has been able to produce her book in time for the Christmas market and to capitalise on the impact of the credit crunch. Nicol's *Sucking Eggs,* in contrast, isn't due until the spring.

'Bookworm'

LUVVIES

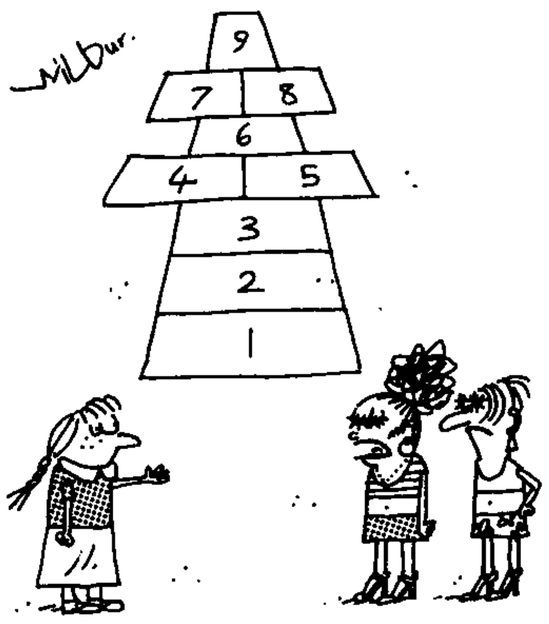
What made you decide to take up acting?

It was about reinvention – it's really exciting reinventing yourself. Your eyes are a little wider, the exposure time is greater. You see things more vividly and more clearly. It's not only about being grateful, it's also about belief. Belief that you can reinvent and succeed and enjoy it more.

LUKE GOSS
***Now* magazine**

Submitted by Simon Russell.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.



"Don't be silly... we've got our heels on"

Seasonal reflective disorder

My Life, My Way
Cliff Richard
(with Penny Junor)
(Headline Review, £20)

HIS life, his way, his book. Yes, it's celebrity memoir season once again, and that sound you can hear is of already enormous egos expanding so rapidly they threaten to break their tethers and float away over the horizon.

This Christmas's consignment of lavishly appointed hardbacks has already been delivered to your local WH Smug by groaning pantechnicons, and with Richard Attenborough, Paul O'Grady and Lorraine Kelly already on the shelves and Dawn French, Julie Walters and Jonny Wilkinson to come, it looks like being a vintage year. One of these books will be the massive mega-seller, the one everyone buys for everyone else, whether they want it or not. Will it be Sir Cliff's? One nervous publisher on Euston Road will certainly be hoping so.

Cliff has of course lived a long, long life. "It has been a long journey from Cheshunt, and the council estate where I lived with my family in the 50s." When they first arrived from India, they had few possessions, nowhere to live and £5. Shades of the Four Yorkshiremen sketch here: Cliff and his mother shared a pair of shoes – the revelation the tabloids missed – and "three times a week our main meal was two slices of toast each with tea poured over them and sugar on top... It was tough but it didn't do us any harm."

When he was a teenager, Harry and his sister were late back from the cinema and his father wouldn't let them in the house, so they settled down to sleep in the coal shed. "We were never late again – ever; and to this day I am a stickler for being on time." Dad "ran our family with a rod of iron" but "it seems to me, with hindsight, entirely justified". It always does, strangely enough.

Cliff then races through the early years of his career as though he has a prior engagement. So long has he been polishing these anecdotes, you suspect he can no longer remember the actual events. Within a chapter or so he's a global megastar (except in the US), contemplating conversion to Christianity and moving in with his "manager" Bill. At last, we think, the nitty gritty.

In fact, Cliff proves as evasive as ever. If he'll admit to anything, it's low-level heterosexuality: he tells us about some early girlfriends and lets us know how attractive he finds the women of Paris, stopping short of saying "Phwoarr!". But he does keep mentioning homosexuality, if only to say he hasn't a problem with it.

After a while you find yourself trying to decode the most innocent sentences. "I've always been a coward when it comes to telling people things I know they won't want to hear." Such as informing your fans that you are a friend of Dorothy? "I rented an apartment in Florida recently and before I left I couldn't resist going through it with a vacuum cleaner." Not that anyone would suggest that a lifelong love of housework is an indicator of sexual preference; nor is the admission that he once played Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* But because he tells you so little with his actual words, he effectively coerces you to try to read between the lines. "After a long session of theological argument and discussion I would often stay the night with him and his mother in Finchley..."

Maybe surprisingly, the chapters dealing with his faith are the most interesting in the book, but then they are actually about something. Otherwise the prevailing ethic tends to be One More Paragraph To Go. "I met Mother Teresa just once," starts one tale. "Another life brutally cut short was Jill Dando's," runs another. "My love affair with Portugal began in 1961," kicks off a whole chapter.

In between, he rants on and on about British radio's refusal to play his new songs, and his continuing inability to break America. And it gradually dawns on the reader that celebrity memoirs are now all but interchangeable: the tough childhood, the "hard but fair" psychotic dad, the early years of success dimly remembered, the houses in Barbados, the famous friends, the grudges borne against "the media", the endless gnawing hunger for validation.

Maybe the enormous cheque he will receive for this book will help with the last of these, but don't bet on it.

A wedding dress made of rubber washing-up gloves has been created by a Manchester-based artist. Priced at £15,000, the dress, A Mixture of Frailties, is made with 1,400 yellow Marigold gloves turned inside out. Designed by Susie MacMurray, 49, the garment has been on show at the Tuille House Museum & Art Gallery in Carlisle, Cumbria. Fiona Venables, the curator at Tuille House, said: 'The work demonstrates both the young girl's dream of a white wedding and the mundane reality of household chores.'

Daily Telegraph

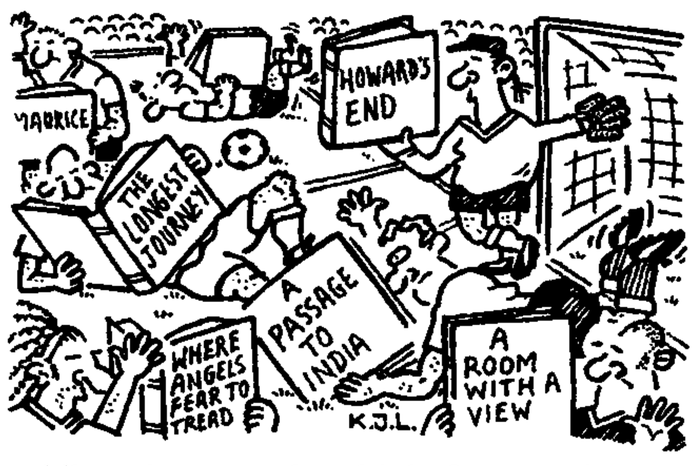
Bogs, it occurred to [Professor Stuart] McLean, confound any clear-cut opposition between the natural and the social; they instead symbolize the linkage between landscape and people as a continuum of colonisation, and problematise outmoded dichotomies between 'nature' and 'culture', the material and the symbolic.

McLean considers bog landscapes as marking at once a culturally instituted boundary and a point of contact and transmissions between human settlement and visions of an un-reclaimed 'nature', between colonial imaginings of primitivism and modern ideologies... *[continues]*

University of Minnesota research website

Pseuds Corner

Only connect. E.M. Forster used this phrase as an epigraph to *Howard's End* and it is also a theme that runs through another of his fabulous novels, *A Passage to India*. Reporting on the



muddle, mistrust and multiple fractures in Newcastle United last week the thought struck me that had these books been made compulsory reading on Tyneside and at West Ham too, Kevin Keegan and Alan Curbishley might not have tended their resignations...[*continues*]

LOUISE TAYLOR, *Guardian* sport blog

It was Gandhi who said, 'there are people in the world so hungry that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.' That is unlikely to apply to Robert Schofield, boss of the UK's biggest food manufacturer, Premier Foods.

ALEX BECKETT, *The Grocer*

My Bloody Valentine were sensational on Friday, sounding simultaneously sweet and harsh, slow and fast, sleepy soft and nightmare loud. Their deafening 15-minute white-noise thunderstorm in the climactic 'You made me realise' was exhilarating, a sonic equivalent of the Large Hadron Collider punching black holes in the fabric of space-time.

STEPHEN DALTON, *The Times*

HOW TO WRAP FRUIT: SOUTHWARK PLAYHOUSE SECRETS If you like fruit, fancy packaging and lunchtime live art Southwark Playhouse has got a treat for you. Elena Cassidy Smith presents a combination of live performance and visual art. A gift wrapping service that teeters on the brink of pointlessness.

Press release

Q: 'Bentley convertible or Porsche?'
A : 'It depends on what I'm wearing.'

VICTORIA BECKHAM,
Harrods Magazine

CONTRIBUTORS: Vernon Gibberd, Bruce Fleming, Richard Moffoot, Sam Walton, John Kingsman, Georges SenGupta, John Hunt.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

PFI

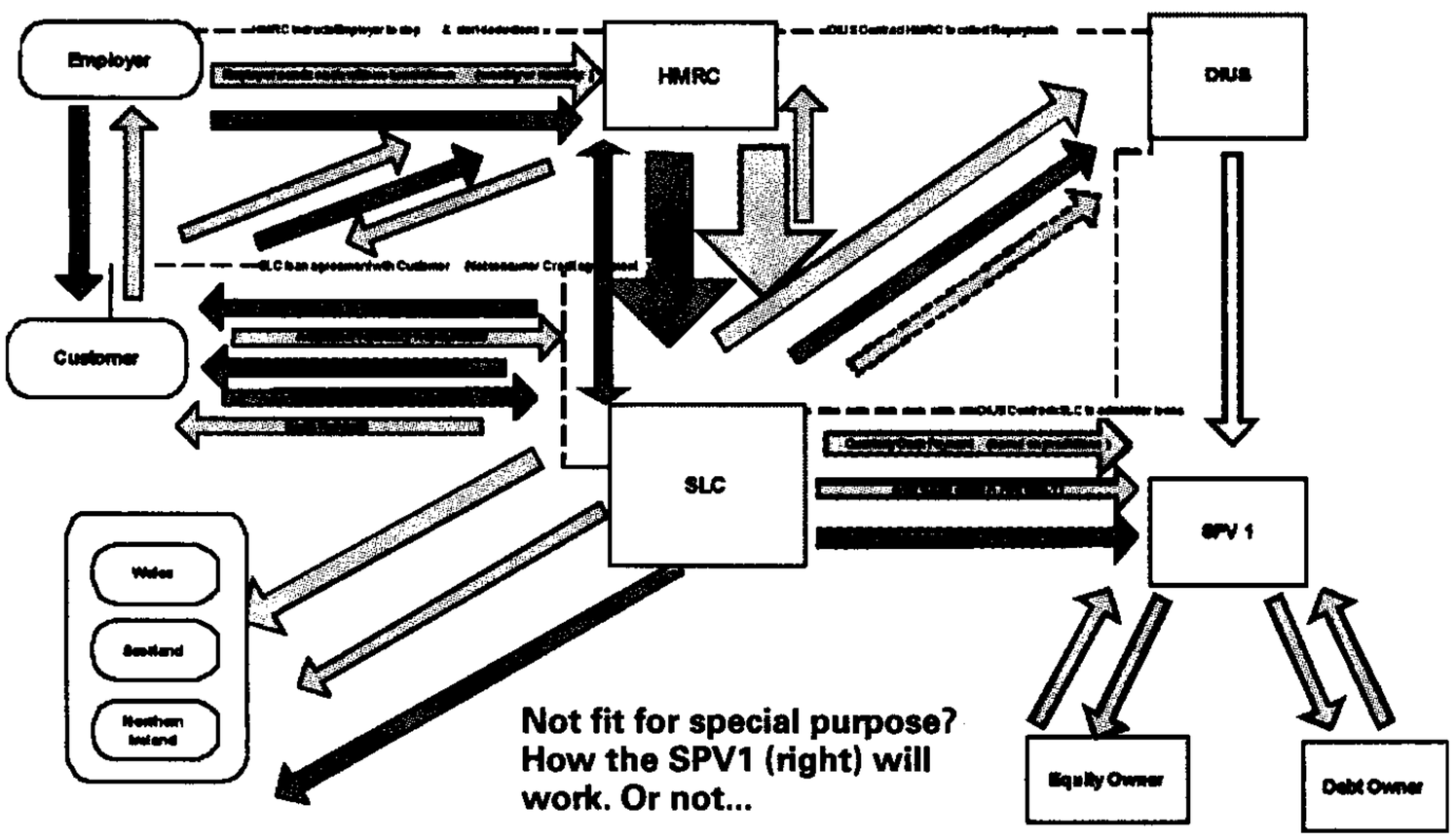
Off balance and off his trolley

MUCH of the current financial crisis, claims Gordon Brown, can be put down to off balance sheet finance: the "securitization" or packaging up of debts followed by their sale to "special purpose vehicles" that appear on nobody's balance sheet.

Strange then that this July, well after Brown and chancellor Darling had started speaking out against off balance sheet finance, the Sale of Student Loans Act became law. The whole

purpose of the £6.3bn sell-off is to get student loans off the government's books and put some cash into the government's coffers. But as the banks who will take over the loans will have to pay more for their funds than the government, and the government will have to make up the difference, the off-balance sheet option will end up costing the taxpayer even more than the conventional on balance sheet arrangement.

The sell-off, which a government spokesman insisted to the *Eye* will go ahead despite Brown's comments, involves the securitisation of the loans and onward sale to a special purpose vehicle (SPV) of exactly the sort now deemed "irresponsible", as depicted in the government's baffling "outline" plan for the scheme *(below)*.



Not fit for special purpose? How the SPV1 (right) will work. Or not...

OFF BALANCE NUMBER CRUNCHING

£20bn Debts moved "off balance sheet" by failed bank HBOS, of the sort Gordon Brown insists "have got to be on balance sheet"

£35bn Government debt moved "off balance sheet" under Gordon Brown's private finance initiative

Shot in the foot

THE allure of off balance sheet finance has produced no more bizarre policy than the scheme to privatise defence training (*Eyes passim*). Because the plan to transform defence training involved raising around £1bn for buildings (a fraction of the total £12bn value), it had to be done through PFI which means the training itself will be provided by private companies.

As defence secretary Des Browne explained last year: "The most significant advantage was that [PFI] allowed us the opportunity to make capital investment that, I candidly admit, we could not otherwise make."

The only reason PFI was needed was to keep the debt off the books so as not to breach the government's self-imposed and arbitrary borrowing limit of 40 percent of gross domestic product, which is now set to be scrapped anyway.

The result is the prospect of military training being handed to some very questionable operators. One member of the Metrix consortium lined up for the project is private education company Nord Anglia, no stranger to criticism. Now, reports the *Times Educational Supplement*, a company it jointly owns with Amey is being investigated by Scotland Yard's fraud squad over £240,000 in missing grants intended for vulnerable youths.

JUNKETS

Out on a Bender

FEW would argue that the government department responsible for regulating business needs to listen to what industry has to say, but do its officials always have to do so over an expensive meal paid for by the vested interests?

A freedom of information request by the *Eye* has established that in a 33 month period between April 2004 and December 2006 (the latest for which details would be handed over), a handful of the most senior directors at the department for business, enterprise and regulatory reform (BERR) were entertained on 360 occasions. With very rare exceptions for the odd academic or journalist, the invitations came exclusively from big business and its executives who, by strange coincidence, are by some stretch the greatest beneficiaries of ten years of New Labour.

BERR's junketer-in-chief is its top man, permanent secretary Sir Brian Bender (who, to be fair to him, personally overturned his officials' earlier refusal to release any information on hospitality). In 2006 alone he was taken out 33 times, including five times by the CBI: to the lobbyist's annual dinner, its gala dinner, a special dinner for all Whitehall's permanent secretaries and two more private affairs.

Others hosting Sir Brian included: oil company Shell (twice) that artfully avoided loudly demanded windfall taxes as its profits soared a couple of years ago; the bankers from Goldman Sachs, Rothschilds, Barclays HSBC and RBS to whom the public has so much to be grateful; big four beancounters KPMG and Ernst & Young who continue to enjoy the lightest of regulation from BERR despite repeated involvement in corporate failures; and other great British companies to have benefited from minimal government interference in the market as their profits rocketed, such as Tesco and BAT (formerly British American Tobacco).

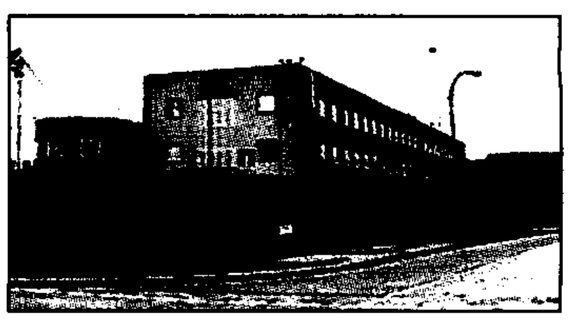
Confirming what details of hospitality elsewhere in Whitehall have already suggested (see *Eyes passim*), the Sir Humphrey job comes with an obligatory day out at Wimbledon. In Bender's case the junket was provided by Britain's largest recipient of food subsidies and scourge of developing world sugar producers, Tate & Lyle, whose hand-outs are negotiated at EU level based on representations from member government departments including BERR and which had not long before had its privileged position confirmed under an EU-World Trade Organisation deal. An interest that Sir Brian might or might not have contemplated as he sprinkled his strawberries...

CASTLEREAGH REVISITED

Teenage kicks

THE criminal cases review commission (CCRC) is making legal history – and stirring up another old hornets' nest – with its decision to refer two Northern Ireland cases dating from the 1970s to the court of appeal.

It is believed to be the first time the CCRC has intervened in cases where the defendants have actually pleaded guilty at their original trial and where there has not already been a failed appeal.



Both involve men now in their 40s, who were only 16 at the time they were being held at the notorious Castlereagh detention centre in Belfast at the height of the terrorist violence, and who were said to have confessed to belonging to the youth wing of the IRA and related offences.

Castlereagh, which became synonymous with oppression and human rights abuses, was the subject of two damning Amnesty International inquiry reports and was eventually shut down.

Allegations about ill-treatment and oppression in the centre first surfaced around the time the two teenagers were detained. At one stage about 1,000 detainees a year were being charged with terrorist offences based almost entirely on confessions obtained by RUC interrogators. They included Joseph Fitzpatrick, who was arrested in March 1977 and admitted belonging to a banned organisation and conspiracy to provide information to terrorists; and Terence Sheils, who was arrested in April 1978 and subsequently admitted belonging to a banned organisation and possession of a firearm. They were subject to long hours of interrogation without a lawyer or adult present and were said to have been ready to confess to anything.

Both decided to plead guilty because at the time it was considered a waste of time and counterproductive to try to retract their confessions. They were of course subject to the controversial Diplock courts (no jury, judge only). Fitzpatrick was sentenced to five years and Sheils to two years suspended for three years.

A CCRC statement about both cases said it had decided to refer both cases after considering "a range of issues including the circumstances in which they confessed".

ASYLUM SEEKERS

You're in detention

WHILE criticism of the government's attack on our civil liberties centres on the imprisonment without charge of terrorist suspects for 42 days – spare a thought for failed asylum seekers.

Hundreds are already detained for months, many for years, while awaiting deportation or appeal. But buried within the draft citizenship and immigration bill 2009 are plans to circumvent further the few judicial interventions they can call upon to secure their freedom.

As "offenders" who have served their sentence and are destined to be deported, they attract little public attention or sympathy. But the vast majority are not violent or serious criminals: they are usually destitute and desperate, often prosecuted for petty theft or having false papers. (Asylum seekers have no right to work or receive benefits and, having fled oppressive regimes, often travel on false papers).

They are people like 35-year-old Ahmed Ibrahim, who fled to the UK from Somalia in 1993 and was given indefinite leave to stay. In March 2007 he was convicted of shoplifting and served half of a four-month sentence. He was "released" the following May but taken straight into detention where he has stayed for the past 16 months. He cannot return to Mogadishu because of the dangers – not as they might apply to him but to the escorts needed to fly him into the capital – and also because the European court of human rights has intervened.

Most long-term detainees are held at Colnbrook immigration centre, run by the US private security giant Serco. The London Detainee Support Group is currently providing advocacy and emotional support to more than 50 immigration detainees there who have been incarcerated for between one and three years – at a cost to the taxpayer of more than £1,350 a week each (or more than £68,000 a year).

Some become so desperate they end up giving up their asylum battle and volunteering to return home. Last year that decision cost Iraqi Solyman Rashed his life. After 15 months in detention, he "volunteered" to return to Baghdad and was killed by a roadside bomb two weeks later.

Others are effectively stateless because they do not hold valid passports, and countries like Iran and Algeria routinely refuse to allow failed asylum seekers to return – even if they themselves decide to risk going back. Another LDSG client, Nourredine Belkaid, 21, is but one example. He also completed a short sentence for theft in August 2006. But he has since been held for more than two years as Algeria will not take him.

For such people one of the few routes to freedom are applications to the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal for bail. But under the draft legislation proposed, the UK Border Agency will also be able to refuse to release someone granted bail by the court if it decides deportation is "imminent" (even if there is no fixed date).

It will also have the right to demand a bail bond. As most detainees, asylum seekers and their families are destitute, they are never going to be able to raise a bond to secure their release. Jerome Phelps of the LDSG said: "These proposals confirm the end of the presumption of liberty – a cornerstone of British law for centuries. It is a chilling piece of legislation that will lead to the unnecessary and costly incarceration of many people for extremely long periods."

LOCKERBIE APPEAL

Howells of outrage

FOREIGN office minister Kim Howells has revealed that the Scottish judges hearing the Lockerbie bombing appeal have agreed to the government's request to keep under wraps evidence that is crucial to the defence of Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi, the Libyan serving life for the murder of the 230 people killed when Pan Am flight 103 was blown from the skies.

The judges apparently gave their ruling at the end of the secret hearing in August to discuss the evidence from a "foreign power" (see *Eye* 1218), which is understood to relate to the bomb's timing device. But as Megrahi's defence team and the public were excluded from the court, no one knew about it until Howells responded to a request for an update from former MP Tam Dalyell.

Instead of allowing Megrahi's lawyers access to this piece of evidence, which forms one of the six grounds of appeal identified by the Scottish criminal cases review commission (SCCRC), the judges are instead to appoint a "special counsel", supposedly to represent Megrahi's interests. According to Howells, this special counsel "will be provided with a confidential summary of the submissions made by the Advocate General at the last (August) hearing".

He or she will need much more than that. The evidence which convicted Megrahi was highly complex, multinational and full of contradictions and anomalies – particularly the evidence surrounding the damning fragment of timing device said to link the bomb to the Libyans and Megrahi. Lawyers preparing his appeal need all the evidence to ensure they have the full picture; but as it stands they do not even know which "foreign power" this piece of evidence comes from and thus how significant it is.

Will a "special counsel" with no detailed knowledge of the case or of the modus operandi of other terrorist organizations operating at the time really be able to assess and advise Megrahi's lawyers about the importance of this evidence after being given a "summary"?

One of the most worrying features of the Megrahi case identified by the Scottish CCRC is that this evidence – and other material - pointing to the Libyan's innocence was concealed from his trial in the first place.

Jim Swire, whose daughter Flora perished in the atrocity, said the foreign office's reliance on public interest immunity to keep secret documents that police, prosecutors and the SCRCC have had in their possession for years, showed that politics was again being allowed to override justice.

In January 2005 journalist Iain Ferguson used freedom of information laws to unearth a staggering agreement between the crown and the US authorities not to introduce such material – even at the price of a fair trial, it would seem.

The UK government of course dismisses claims of interference in Megrahi's appeal. "The decision by the foreign secretary to assert public interest immunity (PII) in relation to certain material is entirely appropriate and in accordance with the rule of law. It is the foreign secretary's assessment that the release of this material would do real and lasting damage to the UK's relations with other states and the UK's national security," says Howells.

DEVELOPMENT AID

Unhappy returns

MYSTERY surrounds the surprisingly poor investment returns of CDC, formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation, which performed dramatically worse than the rest of the market shortly before its fund management arm was sold to CDC's own bosses in 2004.

A close look at CDC's record over recent years raises interesting questions about exactly what was going on in the lead-up to the Actis spin-off, in which CDC suits were able to secure a 60 percent stake for peanuts.

CDC's accounts show that since 2002, the earliest year for which the comparison can be made, the fund's investment returns have far outstripped the standard emerging markets index. In 2002 CDC made a 13 percent return compared to -8 percent generally in emerging markets. In 2000 and 2001 CDC boasted about beating the market too. And since the 2004 spin-off, the fund has beaten the index by between 12 percent (in 2005) and 20 percent (in 2007).

The exception, though, was 2003 when things dipped drastically and CDC achieved just a 20 percent return in a year that emerging markets leapt by a whopping 50 percent. Equally strangely, that year CDC failed to make the direct comparison between its and the market's performance. But why the slump just before the Actis spin-off, and why keep quiet about it?

A crucial element in the Actis sell-off, which was formulated in 2003, was that the bosses, led by CDC chief executive turned Actis senior partner Paul Fletcher, would take a share of the profits (so-called "carried interest") on later sales of CDC investments – in addition to the substantial fee income going to the firm. To work these profit shares out, the investments taken on had to be valued; low valuations just before the creation of Actis would of course have increased the gains on future sales that could be attributed to the Actis bosses' stewardship of CDC's funds. In turn their shares of profits on sales, such as the £280m gain generated last year by offloading most of the Globeleq power generation business, would be significantly bolstered.

One for the National Audit Office as it contemplates the Actis sell-off, perhaps?

Double your money

THE department for international development's (DfID) recently-published accounts reveal another bumper year for Actis, which in 2007 coined total fees of $140m. The rock bottom price that suits including former CDC chief executive Paul Fletcher paid for Actis, however, was based on a business plan seen by the Eye that predicted fee income in 2007 of less than half this figure, $63m.

Part of Actis's plan was to win the business of managing funds other than CDC on the back of CDC's international reputation. But new business hasn't exceeded expectations, so it appears that fees paid by CDC, ie the taxpayer, have far exceeded the plan or that managing other funds is far more profitable than the CDC bosses were letting on.

Befitting what was a public business and is now a secretive private equity operation, Actis refused to offer an explanation. Either way, once again a valuable public business looks to have been woefully under-priced.

● **UNDER CDC's ownership Globeleq has been criticised by activists for over-charging customers in countries such as Tanzania and Uganda, prompting Actis to commission a report for DfID on the company's "development impact". This summer a glowing brochure was duly produced.**

But this is only an edited version of the actual report which, oddly, DfID has so far refused to give to the *Eye*. Actis, meanwhile, is said to be more worried about having the way it commissioned the report exposed after the contract was handed to consultants Arthur D Little by Actis environment and social director Mark Goldsmith – who just happens to be a former employee of Arthur D Little.

You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017 or email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk

In the City

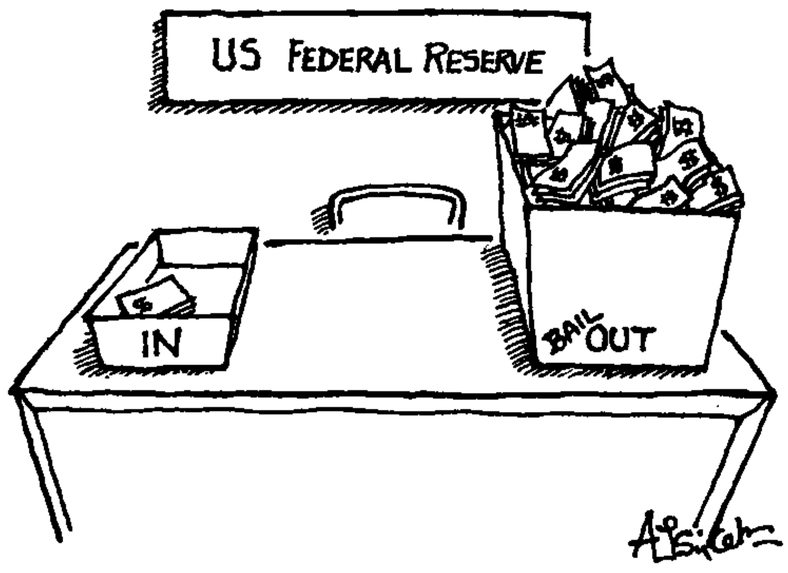
CRASH! BANK! WALLOP!

"In recent times it has become obligatory for the regulators at every opportunity to confess their inadequacy, which in any case is all too evident." (JK Galbraith, *The Great Crash: 1929)*

"A lack of sufficient supervisory engagement with the firm... a lack of adequate oversight and review... inadequate specific resource... a lack of intensity by the FSA." (FSA internal audit division report into Northern Rock, March 2008)

"The last six months have made it abundantly clear that voluntary regulation does not work." (SEC chairman Christopher Cox, last week)

Galbraith's classic account of the events almost exactly 79 years ago that heralded the Great Depression, have an eerie resonance with those of recent weeks. Easy money policies. Excessive leverage. Speculation based on ignorance. New and ingenious financial instruments. Even names like Morgan and Goldman.



Indeed, memories of the 1930s have seen Dubya and Hank Paulson, as well as Democratic politicians, imitating Chicken Little, running round shouting that the sky is falling and only $700bn can keep it up. No billionaire or banker must be left behind.

But much more recently – 20 years ago, ahead of yet another US election, the one that put Daddy Bush in the White House, the American financial system also faced a seismic shock: widespread bankruptcy in the savings and loan industry (America's equivalent to building societies) caused by bad and fraudulent loans on over-valued properties.

One of the biggest crooks, Charles Keating, hired future Fed chairman Alan Greenspan as an economic consultant and also enlisted the help of none other than Senator John McCain in his fight against those pesky regulators. George W Bush's brother, Neil, was a director of another failed S&L, Silverado.

For two years the Reagan administration played down the crisis until Bush the First was elected. Then he presented the taxpayer with the bail-out bill. This was first put at $50bn, but by 1995, when the Resolution Trust Corporation (the predecessor to Paulson's Troubled Asset Relief Program) closed down, that figure was $132bn plus an estimated interest expense for financing the RTC over 30 years put at up to a further $209bn. A total worth approaching $500bn today.

"The ingenuity and zeal with which companies were devised in which securities might be sold was as remarkable as anything." (Galbraith)

The 1929 crash persuaded the home of capitalism that business was too important to be left to businessmen. But the 1929 lessons have been relentlessly ignored by successive governments over the past 25 years. The pressure from the bankers was for deregulation. The result with collaterised debt obligations and credit default swaps was either no regulation or regulatory capture.

The nationalisation of first Northern Wreck and now Bradford & Bingley, plus the enforced rescue of HBOS, are in part the result of the "light touch meaning don't touch" regulatory regime created by Gordon Brown, the man who now talks about cleaning up the City and the "age of irresponsibility".

The Fundamentally Supine Authority, a Brownite creation, failed to foresee the train wrecks at either Northern Rock or B&B as they piled into the wholesale money markets to fund expansion into ever more risky mortgages and, in the case of B&B, bought billions in "sub-prime" toxic loans from major originators such as the American lender GMAC.

As detailed in *Eye* 1212 in June, B&B had bought almost £9bn in "sub-prime" loans from GMAC since 2002. Many of these were of the "Alt-A" variety, or what have come to be called "liar loans" based on self-certification and little documentation. These were the borrowers who were supposed to be better risks because they did not have the bad credit records of the genuine "sub-prime" borrowers. But this was just a gloss, as the ever-rising arrears and repossessions on the B&B loan book have proved.

In a desperate bid to avoid collapse, B&B renegotiated its deal with GMAC last week. Back in December 2006 it had agreed to take up to £4bn a year of this toxic waste from GMAC for the next three years. It had taken £2.4bn by the time the credit crunch began last year. Since then it has been forced to continue taking loans but on a more restricted basis – £350m a quarter. It was faced with taking another £1.75bn on its balance sheet by December 2009. Last week's agreement committed B&B to taking mortgages worth £500m by the end of 2008 and a further £250m next year.

But will the taxpayer now have to pay to receive these rubbish loans? The GMAC legacy is already a big slice of B&B's £40-50bn loan book, of which some 85 percent are buy-to-let and self-certified mortgages. The "liar loans" make up some 15-20 percent of that total.

GMAC made big profits from securitising those £9bn in loans to B&B and transferring the risk. Will the Treasury tell GMAC what they can do with that £750m-worth of similar rubbish which is heading B&B's way? We shall see, but do not bet on it once lawyers start talking about the law of contract.

But perhaps British banks expected to take the first £15bn hit from any losses on the B&B loan book will be demanding that GMAC should be first in line to pay.

As with Northern Wreck, the B&B disaster shows once again the limitations of non-executive directors in preventing banking crashes. They are dependent on the management for information and it is the management that is driving the car over the cliff. As "Tiny" Rowland, the dominant Lonrho founder, declared, the non-executives have proved little more than "baubles on a Christmas tree".

The FSA decided the Northern Rock non-execs had been "out of their depth". No doubt the same verdict will be made on those who supposedly oversaw B&B.

How exactly non-executive directors are supposed to oversee banks dealing in financial instruments that few, including the management, really understand is among the issues that remain to be addressed in the brave new regulatory world which is promised.

"One of the uses of depression is the exposure of what auditors fail to find." (Galbraith)

After the 2000 stock market crash, New York State attorney general Eliot Spitzer descended on Wall Street and brought prosecutions and settlements over a whole range of bad behaviour and client rip-offs which had gone either unknown or unchallenged by the supposed regulators of the insurance, mutual fund and banking industries. One such regulator declared that the securities industry would not like what Spitzer was proposing. His answer was that regulators were not there to do what was acceptable to those they regulated.

The FSA, in its dealings with the banks who brought us the sub-prime crisis, showed all the signs of similar regulatory capture. But then that has been its approach to the City, encouraged by Gordon Brown. Ten years ago Peter Mandelson reportedly reassured the masters of the universe that the Labour government was "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich"; the sentiment was echoed only this March by business secretary John Hutton. These are the people who now promise a crackdown on the big bonus culture!

"For now, free at last from all threat of government reaction or retribution, the market sailed off into the wild blue yonder." (Galbraith)

So how surprising is it to discover just how cosy the FSA has been with those it is supposed to regulate? Information released under the freedom of information act relating to entertaining done by ex-banker Hector Sants, the FSA's chief executive and former head of its wholesale markets division, throws a revealing light on that relationship.

Sants liked to host expensive dinners at top restaurants for the City's big players from the worlds of hedge funds and private equity – no doubt to keep informed. The list of his guests – paid for by the FSA – is a who's who of many of those now reviled for "short selling" and building huge corporate debt mountains while paying themselves massive salaries.

In September 2004, Sants hosted a hedge fund dinner costing £1,597. The 12 hedge fund reps attending were from CQS Management, Lansdowne Partners, Brevan Howard, Children's Investment Fund (TCIF), Marshall Wace, Polygon, Ferox, Rubicon, Tudor Capital, Callidus, Gartmore and Cheyne Capital Management – one

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG

FREE MARKET LIBERALISM HAS SERVED US WELL, BUT NOW WE NEED A SUBTLE POLICY ADJUSTMENT...
COMRADES!
LET US NATIONALISE THE COMMANDING HEIGHTS OF THE ECONOMY.

of the first to be hit by the credit crunch.

In June 2005, there was another hedge fund dinner, this time at top chef Andre Mosimann's restaurant in Mayfair. The cost was £2,363. The diners were from Polygon, CQS, Lansdowne, Ferox, Rubicon, Tudor, Brevan Howard and Cheyne again, plus Man Investments, Odey Asset Management and WMG.

There was another dinner at Mosimann's in October 2005 hosted by Sants, this time for asset managers. At the table were BGI Europe, Insight Investment Management, Jupiter, CSAM, F&C, Schroders, Morley, UBS, M&G, Fidelity, Henderson and RLAM. The bill: £2,228.

A month later it was time to entertain the "hedgies" again. This time there were more new faces. Julius Baer, GLG Partners, Sloane Robinson, Black River Global Fund Services, KBC, Dawnay Day Olympia (Dawnay Day, which sold out of this joint venture, has been another credit crunch casualty), Pentagon Capital and Perry Capital, plus regulars WMG, TCIF and Marshall Wace. The bill: £1,873.

By 18 January 2007 it was the turn of private equity at Mosimann's. Those attending were from Doughty Hanson, 3i, Graphite Capital, Russell Investment, Och-Ziff, Permira, Babson Capital, Montagu Private Equity, Bridgepoint and Alchemy Partners. The bill: £1,952.

Five weeks later there was another pleasant dinner at Mosimann's for yet more top figures from private equity. This time the attendees included some of those who have since been killed or wounded on the frontline of the crisis – Lehmans, Merrill Lynch, Citigroup and HBOS, plus HSBC, ABN Amro, JP Morgan, LIBA, Mizuho, UBS, Ashurst, Nomura and Bank of America. The tab: £2,369.

Just how much of the conversation related to the already looming credit crisis is unknown. But Alchemy's Jon Moulton has consistently said that he was warning about reckless lending and the CDO derivatives time bomb. And HSBC that month had been the first to call attention to the cost of "sub-prime" lending caused by slumping US house prices.

If Sants wanted any further inside information he could perhaps have received it on 20 March, when he was back at Mosimann's with 16 of his hedge fund pals. The guest list – Marshall Wace, Aspect Capital, RAB Capital (now struggling), Tudor, GLG, WMG, Rubicon, CQS, Brevan Howard, Man Investments (now seeking FSA protection from short selling by perhaps fellow guests), Egerton, Perry Capital, Augustus Asset Management, Pentagon Capital (this year accused by the SEC of defrauding mutual fund investors by late trading and market timing – Pentagon deny the charges), TCI and Financial Risk Management. This tab was a mere £2,564.

Perhaps the subject of short selling came up. Hedge funds are big "short" traders, often because they run "long/short" positions but also because short selling is a way of making big profits if you guess right or, more often, have good information on a company's weakness or over-valuation.

Several of those whom Sants hosted in 2005 and 2007 have been named and blamed this year for legally "shorting" British banks. GLG profited from shorting B&B. So, too, did CQS. Lansdowne gained by selling short HBOS, Northern Rock and Barclays.

Sants has now banned the short-selling activities of his dinner guests in financial stocks until January. No doubt they will have a lot to say to him the next time he invites them for dinner.

"The purpose is to accommodate the speculator and facilitate speculation. But the purposes cannot be admitted. If Wall Street confessed this purpose, many thousands of moral men and women would have no choice but to condemn it for nurturing an evil thing and call for reform." (Galbraith)

"Every great crisis reveals the excessive speculations of many houses which no one before suspected." (Walter Bagehot, *Lombard Street*, published 1873).

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 375

by Cyclops

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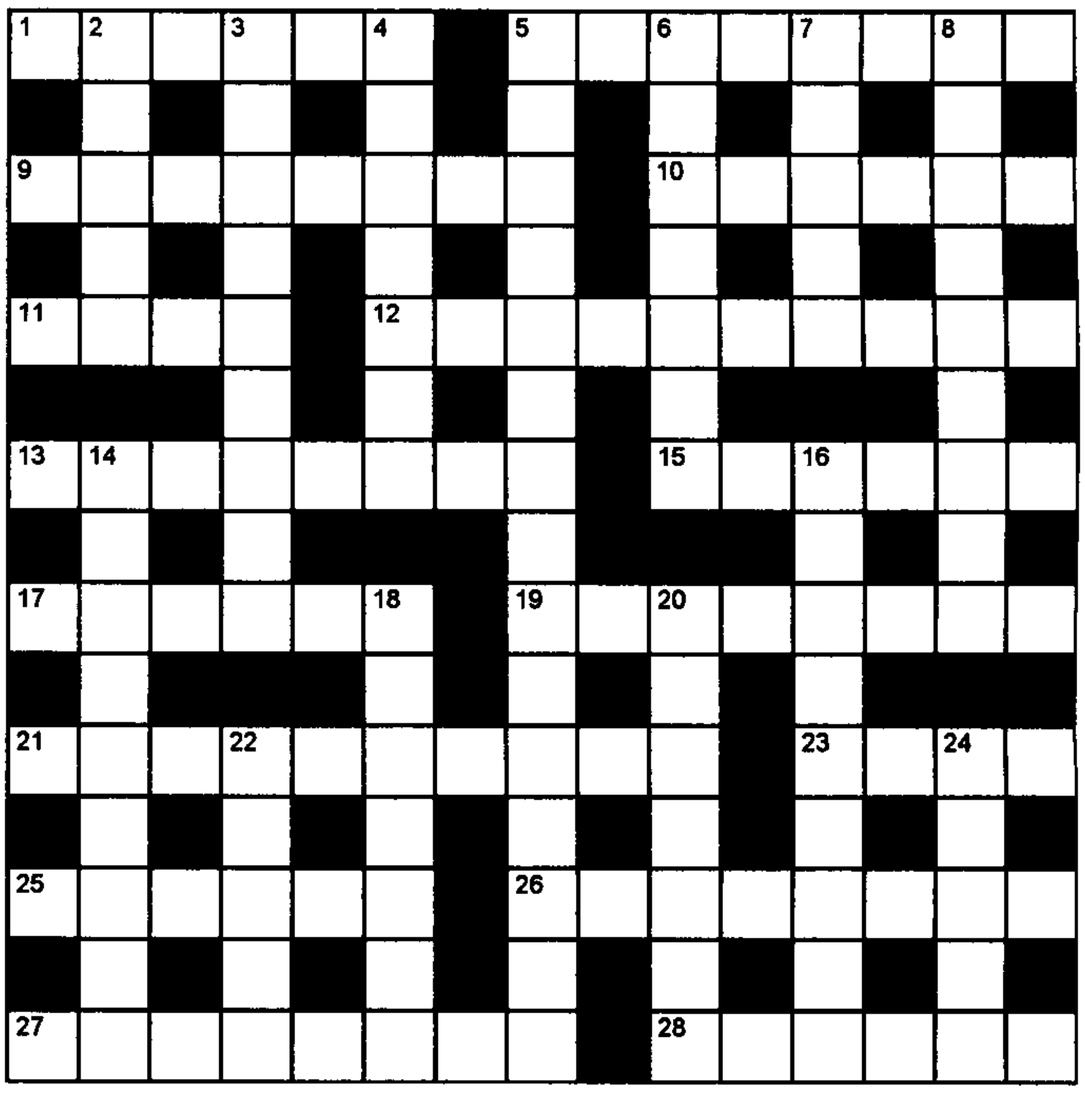

ACROSS

1 Bill having penetrated went like the clappers (with gaps between) (6)
5 Juice-supplying company peer now out to grab the money (8)
9 Bondage types might use these container backs to plug men (8)
10 Countries supposedly united feud at heart on meeting hitch (6)
11/23 'Dubya' to speak out for "vulnerability" (4,4)
12 Brenda's after a shot, so bung! (10)
13 Sad soul restrained by legal document, subjected to nit-picking (8)
15 Reveal some bum that is a church member (6)
17 "Overturns" as the anal sex devotee likes to put it? (6)
19 Unable to have an erection? Get it out of the pump! (4-4)
21 Backing Enron's leadership, so gets in fancy corrupt lawyer (10)
23 See 11ac.
25 Sporting e.g. bra third of size needed for the city (6)
26 Goggles produced by magazine nuts (8)
27 Hardly aroused, squeezing Brenda's arms and whatnot (8)
28 Andre's syphilitic houses quite chic (6)

DOWN

2 Maybe the queen sounded calm (5)
3 Repression of Fanny Blue (9)
4 Shop famous footballer getting end away – "He scored!" (7)
5 Prescott old yet stricken with love – does it mean we're not all treated the same? (8,7)
6 Town writes off said, over-the-top luvvie (7)
7 Clip from *Adulterer Unmasked* – let's see it again! (5)
8 Former president's first permit – Cyclops has one of Nixon's? (9)
14 Kiss, in pure excitement, an opening, then clean up (9)
16 Blur, Oasis bollocksed feeble intros touring USA, etc. (9)
18 Dicky has to screw trolley in hospital corridor? (7)
20 Broadcast supremo is a plonker (7)
22 Country is utter wind up – one pisses off (5)
24 Looks like a lecher's large opening goes squidgy (5)

Crossword 374 winner: GEOFF HAMER

ACROSS: 6 Euro-MP 9 Headwind 10 Unshaken 11 Lunacy 12 Running mate 15 Sod off 16 Vacuum 19 Brown-nosing 22 Stilts 24 Scanties 25 Unlawful 26 Outcry.

DOWN: 1 Lothario 2 Shindig 4 Rwanda 5 Knocked up 7 Ulna 8 Poking fun 13 Give it a go 14 Tombstone 17 Cogitate 18 Fossil 20 Oilcan 21 Peer 23/3 Softball.

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TOUR 2008

TOUR DATES

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2 October
The Shaw Theatre

WARWICK*
3 October
Bridge House Theatre

STRATFORD UPON AVON
5 October
Marquee, Centenary Gardens

MANCHESTER
7 October
Funktion Room, Pure

EDINBURGH
9 October
Jongleurs

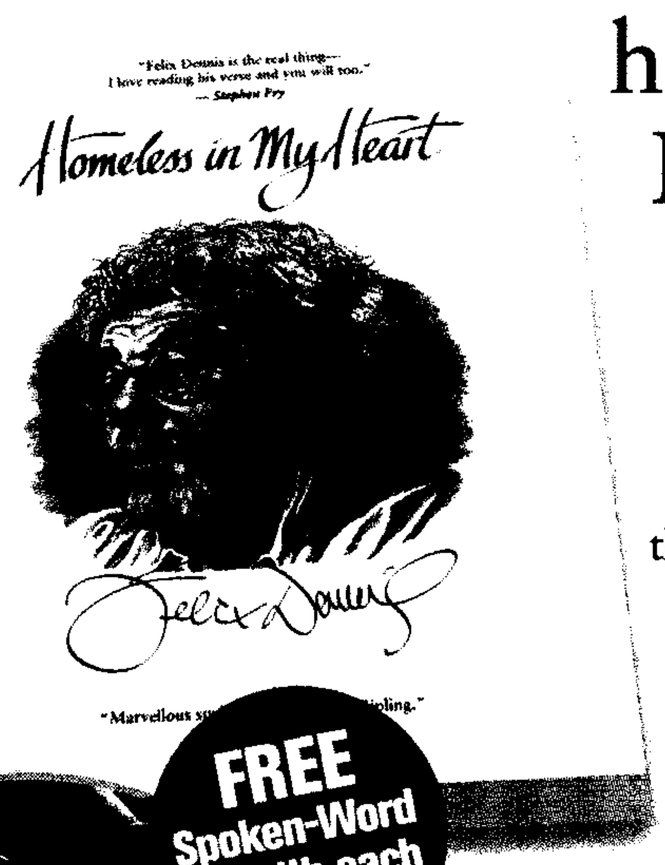
BRIGHTON
13 October
Komedia

CARDIFF
14 October
The Glee Club

LONDON
17 October
The Shaw Theatre

DUBLIN
20 October
The Button Factory

WINDERMERE, CUMBRIA
21 October
Wordsworth Trust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— Stephen Fry
Homeless in My Heart
Felix Dennis
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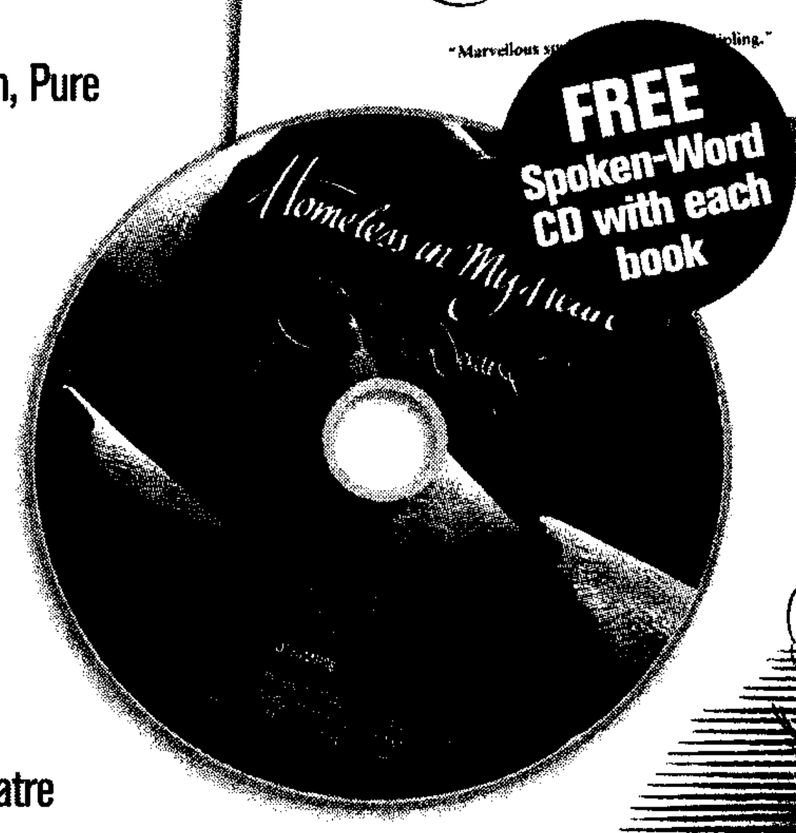

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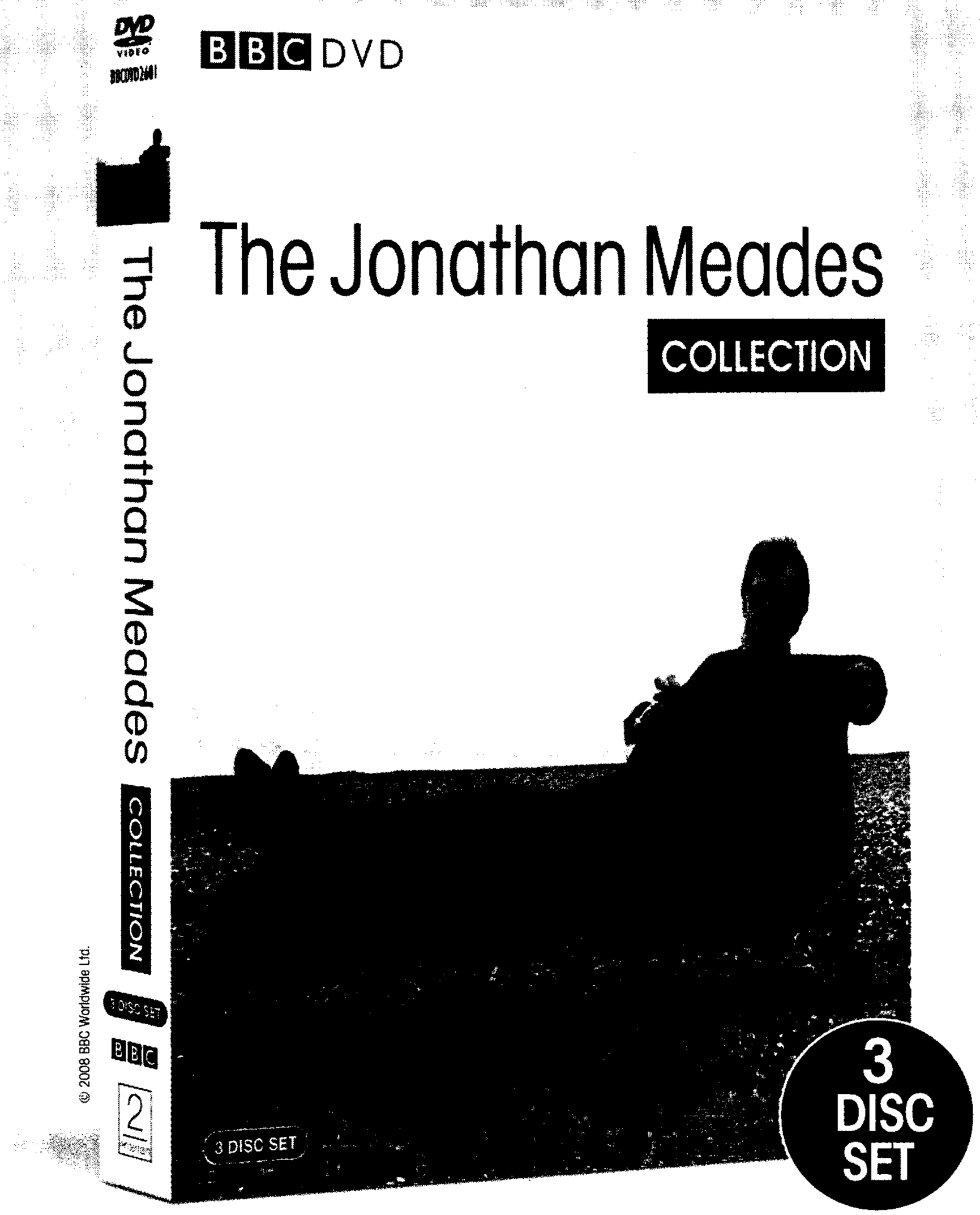

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A harbour on the Mediterranean coast (adapted), *Paul Signac 1863 - 1935* (C) RMN / © Hervé Lewandowski

PAUL Signac was first seduced by the Côte d'Azur when he moored his yacht in St Tropez during May 1892.

His enthusiastic reports attracted other painters, among them Matisse, Bonnard and Dufy, and before long the area was home to one of the most important artistic colonies of the modern period.

The intensity of the light, the brightness of the colours and the raw beauty of the countryside purified palettes, dissolved form and changed the course of Western Art.

A hundred years on, the vivid sites and scenes that inspired these artists have become the inspiration behind our new Matisse Cruise.

The journey begins in Málaga, where Picasso was born, and ends in Nice, where Matisse died. Apart from a short detour to Palma de Mallorca, it hugs the Mediterranean coasts of mainland Spain and France. At all ports of call, whether in the towns themselves or in the hills of the hinterland, there are visits to a sequence of art collections which constitute the richest seam of art of the period to be found anywhere in the world.

Three museums are devoted to Picasso, two to Miró and one each to Matisse, Chagall, Léger and Vasarely. There are also the studios of Renoir and Cézanne and the chapels decorated by Matisse and Picasso. Other museums range from major municipal galleries to small private collections – some of them in the collectors' homes.

We're fortunate, too, to have several world-renowned speakers accompany us on the cruise. (They include Hilary Spurling, whose recent biography of Matisse has been so widely acclaimed.)

The cruise takes place from 15–24 April 2009, at a time of the year when the sparkling Mediterranean hues can be seen to their best advantage, and before the sun has acquired the ferocity that can make summer voyaging wearisome.

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As Matisse himself said, "in the beginning you must subject yourself to the influence of Nature." We hope this cruise will help you appreciate how Nature helped nurture some of the most extraordinary art of the 20th century. ✠

Highlights of the Matisse Cruise: Day 1: Málaga – the Picasso Museum, a magnificent collection of Joan Miró and a collection of his works in a striking new museum. Days 4 & 5: Barcelona – the studio and the Musée Granet. Trip to Mont Ste-Victoire. Day 7: St-Tropez – the Musée de l'Annonciade, an outstanding collection of Post-Impressionist works. Visit to the Musée Picasso in Antibes. Day 8: To Biot, and the Musée Fernand Léger. Vence, and the joyous Chapelle du Rosaire decorated by Matisse. St-Paul-de-Vence, and the sculptures by Miró, Giacometti and Calder. Vallauris, and Picasso's works in clay in the Musée de la Céramique. Day 9: Nice, and the Musée Matisse, Cagnes-sur-Mer, and Renoir's house, containing many of his paintings. Return to Nice, and the Musée des Beaux-Arts Jules Chéret with numerous works by Raoul Dufy. Plus the Musée National Message Biblique Marc Chagall. Fly back to London. Day 10: Nice, Villefranche, Beaulieu, and Cap Ferrat. The Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain.

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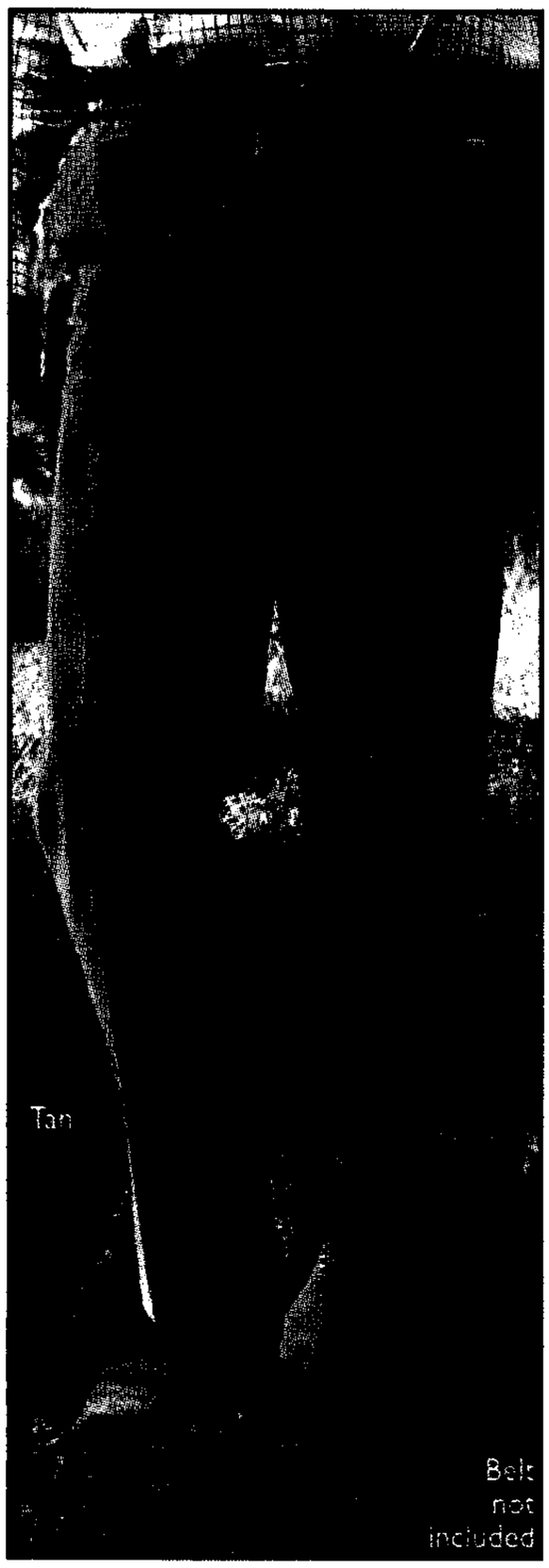

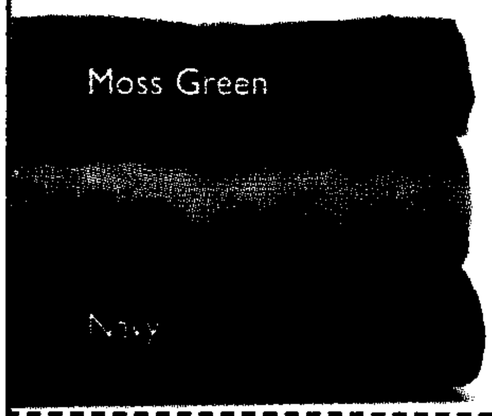

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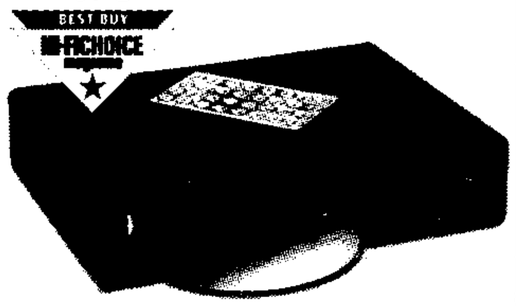

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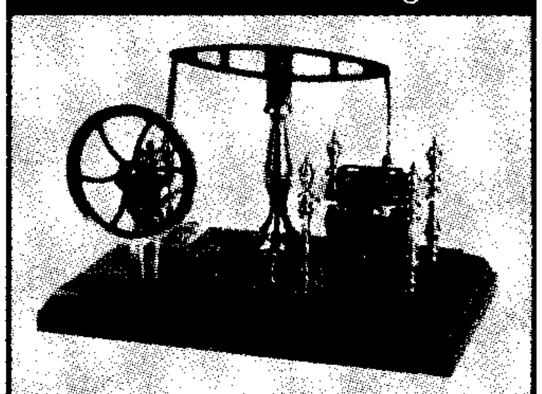

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